

School Edition

THE WORKS
OF
ALFRED LORD TENNYSON

POET LAUREATE

IN FOUR PARTS

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IDYLLS OF THE KING

DEDICATION

THESE to His Memory—since he held
them dear,
Perchance as finding there unconsciously
Some image of himself—I dedicate,
I dedicate, I consecrate with tears—
These Idylls

And indeed He seems to me
Scarce other than my king's ideal knight,
'Who reevesenced his conscience as his
king,
Whose glory was, redressing human wrong,
Who spake no slander, no, nor listen'd
to it,
Who loved one only and who clave to her—'
Her—over all whose realms to their last
isle,
Commungled with the gloom of imminent
wai,
The shadow of His loss drew like eclipse,
Darkening the world We have lost
him he is gone
We know him now all narrow jealousies
Are silent , and we see him as he moved,
How modest, kindly, all accomplish'd,
wise,
With what sublime repression of himself,
And in what limits, and how tenderly ,
Not swaying to this faction or to that ,
Not making his high place the lawless
peich
Of wing'd ambitions, nor a vantage ground
For pleasure , but thro' all this tact of
years
Wearing the white flower of a blameless
life,

Before a thousand peering littlenesses,
In that fierce light which beats upon a
throne,
And blackens every blot for where is he,
Who dares foreshadow for an only son
A lovelier life, a more unstain'd, than his?
Or how should England dreaming of *his*
sons
Hope more for these than some inheritance
Of such a life, a heart, a mind as thine,
Thou noble Father of her Kings to be,
Laborious for her people and her poor—
Voice in the rich dawn of an amplei dvy—
Far-sighted summoner of Wai and Waste
To fruitful strifes and rivalries of peace—
Sweet nature gilded by the gracious gleam
Of letters, dear to Science, dear to Art,
Dear to thy land and ours, a Prince indeed,
Beyond all titles, and a household name,
Hereafter, thro' all times, Albeit the Good

Break not, O woman's heart, but still
endue ,
Break not, for thou art Royal, but endue,
Remembering all the beauty of that stu
Which shone so close beside Thee that
ye made
One light together, but has past and leaves
The Crown a lonely splendou

May all love,
His love, unseen but felt, o'eishadow Thee,
The love of all Thy sons encompass Thee,
The love of all Thy daughters cheish Thee,
The love of all Thy people comfort Thee,
Till God's love set Thee at his side again'

THE COMING OF ARTHUR

LEODOGRAN, the King of Camelard,
Had one fair daughter, and none other
child,
And she was fairest of all flesh on earth,
Guinevere, and in her his one delight

For many a petty king ere Arthur came
Ruled in this isle, and ever waging war
Each upon other, wasted all the land,
And still from time to time the heathen
host
Swarm'd overseas, and harried what was
left
And so there grew great tracts of wilder-
ness,
Wheren the beast was ever more and
more,
But man was less and less, till Arthur
came
For first Aurelius lived and fought and
died,
And after him King Uther fought and died,
But either fail'd to make the kingdom
one
And after these King Arthur for a space,
And thoo' the puissance of his Table
Round,
Drew all then petty princedoms under
him,
Their king and head, and made a realm,
and reign'd

And thus the land of Camelaid was
waste,
Thick with wet woods, and many a beast
therin,
And none or few to scare or chase the
beast,
So that wild dog, and wolf and boar and
bear
Came night and day, and rooted in the
fields,
And wallow'd in the gardens of the King
And ever and anon the wolf would steal
The children and devour, but now and
then,
Her own blood lost or dead, lent her
fierce teat

To human sucklings, and the childien,
housed
In her foul den, there at then meat would
growl,
And mock their foster mother on four feet,
Till, straughten'd, they grew up to wolf
like men,
Worse than the wolves And King
Leodogran
Groan'd for the Roman legions here again,
And Caesar's eagle then his brother king,
Urien, assail'd him last a heathen horde,
Reddening the sun with smoke and earth
with blood,
And on the spile that split the mother's
heart
Spitting the child, brake on him, till
amaz'd,
He knew not whither he should turn for
aid
But—for he heud of Arthur newly
crown'd,
Tho' not without an upoun made by those
Who cried, 'He is not Uther's son'—the
King
Sent to him, saying, 'Arise, and help us
thou'
For here between the man and beast we
die'
And Arthur yet had done no deed of
arms,
But heard the call, and came and
Guinevere
Stood by the castle walls to watch him
pass,
But since he neither wore on helm or
shield
The golden symbol of his kingship,
But rode a simple knight among his
knights,
And many of these in richer arms than he,
She saw him not, or mark'd not, if she
saw,
One among many, tho' his face was bare
But Arthur, looking downward as he past,
Felt the light of her eyes into his life

Smite on the sudden, yet rode on, and
pitch'd
His tents beside the forest Then he
davie
The heathen, after, slew the beast, and
fell'd
The forest, letting in the sun, and made
Broad pathways for the hunter and the
knight
And so return'd

For while he linger'd there,
A doubt that ever smoulder'd in the hearts
Of those great Lords and Barons of his
realm
Flash'd forth and into war for most of
these,
Collengung with a score of petty kings,
Made head aginst him, cryng, 'Who
is he
That he should rule us? who hath proven
him
King Uther's son? for lo! we look at him,
And find noi face nor bearing, limbs noi
voice,
Are like to those of Uther whom we knew
This is the son of Gorlois, not the King,
This is the son of Anton, not the King'

And Arthur, passing thence to battle,
Felt
Tiavul, and thioes and agonies of the life,
Desirng to be join'd with Guinevere,
And thinking as he rode, 'Her father said
That there between the man and beast
they die
Shall I not lift her from this land of beasts
Up to my throne, and side by side with
me?
What happiness to reign a lonely king,
Vext—O ye stais that shudder over me,
O euth that soundest hollow under me,
Vext with waste dreams? for swyng I be
join'd
To her that is the fairest under heaven,
I seem as nothing in the mighty world,
And cannot will my will, nor work my
work
Wholly, nor make myself in mine own
realm

Victor and lord But were I join'd with
her,
Then might we live together as one life,
And reigning with one will in everything
Have power on this dark land to lighten
it,
And power on this dead world to make
it live'

Thereafter—as he speaks who tells the
tale—

When Arthur reach'd a field of battle
bright
With pitch'd pavilions of his foe, the
world
Was all so clear about him, that he saw
The smallest rock far on the faintest hill,
And even in high day the morning stu
So when the King had set his banner
blond,
At once from either side, with trumpet-
blast,
And shouts, and clarions shulling unto
blood,
The long lanced battle let their horses
run
And now the Barons and the kings pie
vuld,
And now the King, as here and there
that wai
Went swynging, but the Powers who walk
the world
Made lightnings and great thunders over
him,
And dized ill eyes, till Arthur by mun
micht,
And mightier of his hands with every
blow,
And leading all his knighthood thiew the
kings
Carados, Uien, Cridlemont of Wales,
Claudias, and Clarence of Northumber
land,
The King Brundagois of Latangoi,
With Angusant of Erin, Morganore,
And Lot of Orkney Then, before a voice
As dreadful as the shout of one who sees
To one who sins, and deems himself alone
And all the world asleep, they swerved
and brake

Flying, and Arthur coul'd to stay the brands
That huck'd amon the flyens, 'Ho ! they yield !'
So like a painted bittle the war stood
Silenced, the living quiet as the dead,
And in the heat of Arthur joy was lord
Heigh'upon his warworf whom he loved
And honour'd most 'Thou dost not doubt me King,
So well thine arm hath wrought for me to day,'
'Sir and my liege,' he cried, 'the fire of God
Descends upon thee in the battle field
I know thee for my King !' Whereat the two,
For each had wounded either in the fight,
Swore on the field of death a deathless love
And Arthur said, 'Man's word is God in man
Let chance what will, I trust thee to the death.'

Then quickly from the foughten field
he sent
Ulfius, and Biastus, and Bedivere,
His new made knights, to King Leodogrian,
Saying, 'If I in aught have served thee well,
Give me thy daughter Guinevere to wife.'

Whom when he heard, Leodogrian in heat
Debating—'How should I that am a king,
However much he holp me at my need,
Give my one daughter swyn to a king,
And a king's son?'—lifted his voice, and call'd

A hoary man, his chamberlain, to whom
He trusted all things, and of him required
His counsel 'Knowest thou aught of Arthur's birth ?'

Then spake the hoary chamberlain and said,
'Sir King, there be but two old men that know

And each is twice as old as I, and one
Is Merlin, the wise man that ever served
King Uther thro his magic art, and one
Is Merlin's master (so they call him) Bleys,
Who taught him magic, but the scholu

in

Before the master, and so far, that Bleys
Lud magic by, and sat him down, and wrote

All things and whatsoever Merlin did
In one great vinal book, where after yeareis
Will leurn the secret of our Arthur's birth'

To whom the King Leodogrian replied,
'O friend, had I been holpen half as well
By this King Arthur is by thee to day,
Ihen beast and man had had then shue
of me

But si mon he a before us yet once more
Ulfius, and Biastus, and Bedivere'

Then, when they came before him, the King said,
'I have seen the cuckoo chased by lesser fowl,
And reason in the chuse but wherefore now
Do these you lords stir up the heat of wii,
Some calling Arthur born of Gorlois,
Others of Anton? Tell me, ye your selves,
Holdyc'this Arthur for King Uther's son?'

And Ulfius and Biastus answer'd, 'Ay,
Then Bedivere, the first of all his knights
Knighted by Arthur at his crowning,
spake—
For bold in heat and act and word was he,
Wheneva slander breathed against the King—

'Sir, ther be many rumours on this head
For ther be those who hate him in their hearts,
Call him baseborn, and since his ways are sweet,
And therus are bestial, hold him less than man

And there be those who deem him more than man,
And dream he diopt from heaven but my belief
In all this matter—so ye care to learn—
Sū, for ye know that in King Uther's time
The prince and warrior Goilois, he that held
Tintagil castle by the Cornish sea,
Was wedded with a winsome wife, Ygerne
And daughters had she borne him,—one whereof,
Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Belli cent,
Hath ever like a loyal sister cleaved
To Arthur,—but a son she hid not boare
And Uther cast upon her eyes of love
But she, a stunness wife to Goilois,
So loathed the bright dishonour of his love,
That Goilois and King Uther went towu
And overthown was Goilois and slun
Then Uther in his wrath and heat besieged
Ygerne within Tintagil, whic her man,
Seeing the mighty swum about them wills,
Left her and fled, and Uther enteir'd in,
And there was none to call to but himself,
So, compass'd by the power of the King,
Enforced she was to wed him in her tress,
And with a shameful swiftness after-waird,
Not many moons, King Uther died him self,
Moaning and wailing for an hen to rule
After him, lest the realm should go to wrack
And that same night, the night of the new year,
By reason of the bitterness and gnef
That vext his mother, all before his time
Was Arthur born, and all as soon as born
Deliver'd at a secret postern gate
To Merlin, to be holden far apart
Until his hou should come, because the lords
Of that fierce day were as the lords of this,
Wild beasts, and surely would have torn the child

Piccerel among them, had they known, for each
But sought to rule for his own self and hand,
And many hited Uther for the sake
Of Goilois Wherefore Merlin took the child,
And gave him to Sū Anton, an old knight
And ancient friend of Uther, and his wife
Nursed the young prince, and rear'd him with her own,
And no man knew And ever since the lords
Have foughten like wild beasts among themselves,
So that the realm has gone to wrack but now,
This yea, when Merlin (for his hou had come)
Brought Arthur forth, and set him in the hall,
Proclumung, "Here is Uther's heir, your king,"
A hundred voices cried, "Away with him!
No king of ours! a son of Goilois he,
Or else the child of Anton, and no king,
Or else baseborn" Yet Merlin thoo' his craft,
And while the people clamor'd for a king,
Had Arthur crown'd, but after, the next lords
Dindest, and so brake out in open wrak
Then while the King debated with himself
If Arthur were the child of chamefulness,
Or born the son of Goilois, after death,
Or Uther's son, and born before his time,
Or whether there were trith in anything
Said by these three, theric came to Camelot,
With Gawain and young Modred, her two sons,
Lot's wife, the Queen of Orkney, Belli cent,
Whom as he could, not as he would, the King
Made fast for, saying, as they sat at meat,

"A doubtful thione is ice on summer seas
Ye come from Arthur's court Victo' his men
Report him ! Yea, but ye—think ye this king—
So many those that hate him, and so strong,
So few his knights, however brave they be—
Hath body know to hold his foemen down?"

"O King," she cried, "and I will tell thee few,
Few, but all brave, all of one mind with him,
For I was nev' him when the savage yells
Of Uther's peerage died, and Arthur sat Crown'd on the dais, and his warri ois cried,
"Be thou the king, and we will work thy will
Who love thee?" Then the King in low deep tones,
And simple words of great authority,
Bound them by so strit vows to his own self,
That when they rose, knighted from kneeling, some
Were pale as at the passing of a ghost,
Some flush'd, and others dazed, is one who wakes
Half blinded at the coming of a light

"But when he spake and checr'd his Table Round
With huge divine and comfortable woids
Beyond my tongue to tell thee—I beheld From eye to eye tho' all then Order flush
A momentry likeness of the King
And ere it left then faces, thro' the cross And those around it and the Crucified, Down from the casement over Arthur, smote Flame colour, red and azur, in three rays,
One falling upon each of three fair queens, Who stood in silence near his throne, the friends

Of Arthur, gazing on him, tall, with bright Sweet faces, who will help him at his need

"And there I saw mage Merlin, whose vast wit
And hundred winters are but as the hands Of loyal vassals toiling for their liege

"And nev' him stood the Lady of the Lake,
Who knows a subtler magic than his own—

Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonder ful
She gave the King his huge cross hilted sword,

Whereby to drive the heathen out in mist Of incense cul'd about her, and her face Wellnigh was hidden in the minister gloom,

But there was heard among the holy hymns

A voice as of the waters, for she dwells Down in a deep, calm, whatsoever storms May shake the world, and when the suffice rolls, Hith power to walk the waters like our Lord

"There likewise I beheld Excalibur Before him at his crowning boine, the sword

That rose from out the bosom of the lake, And Arthur row'd across and took it—rich With jewels, esum Urn, on the hilt, Bewildering heut and eye—the blade so bright

That men were blinded by it—on one side, Given in the oldest tongue of all this world,

"I like me" but turn the blade and ye shall see, And written in the speech ye speak your self,
"Crist me awy!" And said was Arthur's true

I taking it, but old Merlin counsell'd him, "I like thou and strike ! the time to cast

Is yet su-off" So this gient brand the
king
Took, and by this will beat his foemen
down'

Thereat Leodogian rejoiced, but
thought
To sift his doubtings to the last, and ask d,
Fixing full eyes of question on her face,
'The swallow and the swift are near akin,
But thou art closer to this noble prince,
Being his own deu sister,' and she said,
'Daughter of Gorlois and Ygaine am I,'
'And therefore Aithur's sister?' ask d
the King
She answer'd, 'These be secret things,'
and sign'd
To those two sons to pass and let them be
And Gawain went, and breaking into song
Spang out, and follow'd by his flying hau
Ran like a colt, and leapt it all he saw
But Modied laid his eu beside the dooors,
And there half heard, the same that
afterward
Struck for the throne, and striking found
his doom

And then the Queen made answer
'What know I?

For dark my mother was in eyes and hau,
And dark in hau and eyes am I, and dark
Was Gorlois, yet and dark was Uther too,
Wellnigh to blackness, but this King is
fin

Beyond the race of Britons and of men
Moreover, always in my mind I heu
A cry from out the dawning of my life,
A mother weeping, and I hear hei say,
"O that ye had some brother, pretty one,
To guard thee on the ough ways of the
world"

"Ay," said the King, "and hear ye
such a cuy?
But when did Aithui chance upon thee
first?"

"O King!" she cried, "and I will tell
thee true
He found me first when yet a little mud
Beaten I had been for a little fault

Whereof I was not guilty, and out I ran
And flung myself down on a bank of
heath,

And hated this fair wold and all therin,
And wept, and wish'd that I were dead,
and he—

I know not whether of himself he came,
Or brought by Merlin, who, they sy,
can walk

Unseen it pleasure—he was at my side
And spake sweet words, and comforted
my heut,

And dried my teus, being a child with me
And many a time he came, and evermore
As I grew greater grew with me, and sad
At times he seem'd, and sad with him
was I,

Stein too it times, and then I loved him
not,
But sweet agun, and then I loved him
well

And now of late I see him less and less,
But thos first dyus had golden hours for
me,

For then I surely thought he would be
king

"But let me tell thee now another tale
For Blys, our Merlin's master, is they
sy,

Died but of late, and sent his cry to me,
To heu him spak before he left his life
Shrunk like a fauy chngeling lay the
image,

And when I enter'd told me that himself
And Merlin ever scived about the King,
Uther, before he died, and on the night
When Uther in Tintagil past awy
Morning and wuling for an haur, the two
Left the still King, and passing forth to
breath,

Then from the castle gateway by the
chasm

Descending thro' the dismal night—a
night

In which the bounds of heaven and earth
were lost—

Beheld, so high upon the dreary deeps
It seem'd in heaven, a ship, the shape
thereof

A^ dragon wing'd, and all from stem to stern
 Bright with a shining people on the decks,
 And gone as soon as seen. And then the two
 Drot to the cove, and watch'd the great sea fall,
 Wave after wave, each mightier than the last,
 Till last, a ninth one, gathering half the deep
 And full of voices, slowly rose and plunged Roaring, and all the wave was in a flame :
 And down the wave and in the flame was borne
 A naked babe, and rode to Merlin's feet, Who stoopt and caught the babe, and cried "The King !"
 Here is an heir for Uther !" And the fringe
 Of that great breaker, sweeping up the strand,
 Lash'd at the wizard as he spake the word, And all at once all round him rose in fire,
 So that the child and he were clothed in fire. And presently thereafter follow'd calm,
 Free sky and stars : "And this same child," he said,
 "Is he who reigns ; nor could I part in peace
 Till this were told." And saying this the seer
 Went thro' the strait and dreadful pass of death,
 Not ever to be question'd any more Save on the further side ; but when I met Merlin, and ask'd him if these things were truth—
 The shining dragon and the naked child Descending in the glory of the seas—
 He laugh'd as is his wont, and answer'd me In riddling triplets of old time, and said :
 " " Rain, rain, and sun ! a rainbow in the sky !
 A young man will be wiser by and by ; An old man's wit may wander ere he die.
 Rain, rain, and sun ! a rainbow on the lea !
 And truth is this to me, and that to thee ;

And truth or clothed or naked let it be. Rain, sun, and rain ! and the free blossom blows : Sun, rain, and sun ! and where is he who knows ? From the great deep to the great deep he goes."
 " So Merlin riddling anger'd me ; but thou
 Fear not to give this King thine only child, Guinevere : so great bards of him will sing Hereafter ; and dark sayings from of old Ranging and ringing thro' the minds of men, And echo'd by old folk beside their fires For comfort after their wage-work is done, Speak of the King ; and Merlin in our time Hath spoken also, not in jest, and sworn Tho' men may wound him that he will not die, But pass, again to come ; and then or now Utterly smite the heathen underfoot, Till these and all men hail him for their king.' She spake and King Leodogran rejoiced, But musing 'Shall I answer yea or nay?' Doubted, and drowsed, nodded and slept, and saw, Dreaming, a slope of land that ever grew, Field after field, up to a height, the peak Haze-hidden, and thereon a phantom king, Now looming, and now lost ; and on the slope The sword rose, the hind fell, the herd was driven, Fire glimpsed ; and all the land from roof and rick, In drifts of smoke before a rolling wind, Stream'd to the peak, and mingled with the haze And made it thicker ; while the phantom king Sent out at times a voice ; and here or there Stood one who pointed toward the voice, the rest Slew on and burnt, crying, 'No king of ours,

No son of Uther, and no king of ours,'
Till with a wink his dream was changed,
 the haze
Descended, and the solid earth became
As nothing, but the King stood out in
 heaven,
Crown'd And Leodogian awoke, and
 sent
Ulfus, and Brastas and Bedivere,
Back to the court of Arthur unsweing yet

Then Arthur charged his warrior whom
 he loved
And honour'd most, Sir Lancelot, to ride
 forth
And bring the Queen,—and watch'd him
 from the gates
And Lancelot past away among the
 flowers,
(For then was latter April) and return'd
Among the flowers, in May, with Guinevere

To whom arrived, by Dubuc the high
 saint,
Chief of the church in Britain, and before
The statelyest of her altars shines, the
 King
That morn was manied, while in stainless
 white,
The fair beginnels of a nobler time,
And glorying in their vows and him, his
 knights
Stood round him, and rejoicing in his joy
Fair shone the fields of May thro' open
 door,
The sacred altar blossom'd white with May,
The Sun of May descended on their King,
They gazed on all earth's beauty in their
 Queen,
Roll'd incense, and there past along the
 hymns
A voice as of the waters, while the two
Sware at the shrine of Christ a deathless
 love
And Arthur said, 'Behold, thy doom is
 mine
Let chance what will, I love thee to the
 death'
To whom the Queen replied with drooping
 eyes,

'King and my lord, I love thee to the
 death'
And holy Dubuc spred his hands and
spake,
'Reign ye, and live and love, and make
 the world
Other, and may thy Queen be one with
 thee,
And all this Order of thy Table Round
Fulfil the boundless purpose of their
 King'

So Dubuc said, but when they left the
 shrine
Great Lords from Rome before the portal
stood,
In scornful stillness gazing as they past,
Then while they pac'd a city all on fire
With sun and cloth of gold, the trumpets
blew,
And Arthur's knighthood sang before the
 King —

'Blow trumpet, for the world is white
 with May,
Blow trumpet, the long night hath roll'd
 away!
Blow thro' the living world—“Let the
 King reign”

'Shall Rome or Heathen rule in
 Arthur's realm?
Flash brand and lance, full battleaxe upon
 helm,
Full battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the
 King reign

'Strike for the King and live! his
 knights have heard
That God hath told the King a secret
 word
Full battleaxe, and flash brand! Let the
 King reign

'Blow trumpet! he will lift us from
 the dust
Blow trumpet! live the strength and die
 the lust!
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand! Let
 the King reign

“ Strike for the King and die ! and if thou diest,
The King is King, and ever wills the highest.
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand ! Let the King reign.

‘ Blow, for our Sun is mighty in his May !
Blow, for our Sun is mightier day by day !
Clang battleaxe, and clash brand ! Let the King reign.

‘ The King will follow Christ, and we the King
In whom high God hath breathed a secret thing.
Fall battleaxe, and flash brand ! Let the King reign.’

So sang the knighthood, moving to their hall.
There at the banquet those great Lords from Rome,
The slowly-fading mistress of the world,
 strode in, and claim’d their tribute as of yore.

But Arthur spake, ‘ Behold, for these have sworn
To wage my wars, and worship me their King ;
The old order changeth, yielding place to new ;
And we that fight for our fair father Christ,
Seeing that ye be grown too weak and old
To drive the heathen from your Roman wall,
No tribute will we pay : so those great lords
Drew back in wrath, and Arthur strove with Rome.

And Arthur and his knighthood for a space
Were all one will, and thro’ that strength the King
Drew in the petty princedoms under him,
Fought, and in twelve great battles overcame
The heathen hordes, and made a realm and reign’d.

THE ROUND TABLE.

GARETH AND LYNETTE.
GERAINT AND ENID.
MERLIN AND VIVIEN.
LANCELOT AND ELAINE.

THE HOLY GRAIL.
PELEAS AND ET TARRE.
THE LAST TOURNAMENT.
GUINEVERE.

GARETH AND LYNETTE.

THE last tall son of Lot and Bellicent,
And tallest, Gareth, in a showerful spring
Stared at the spate. A slender-shafted Pine

Lost footing, fell, and so was whirl’d away.
‘ How he went down,’ said Gareth, ‘ as a false knight

Or evil king before my lance if lance
Were mine to use—O senseless cataract,
Bearing all down in thy precipitancy—
And yet thou art but swollen with cold snows
And mine is living blood : thou dost His will,

The Maker’s, and not knowest, and I that know,
Have strength and wit, in my good mother’s hall
Linger with vacillating obedience,
Prison’d, and kept and coax’d and whistled to—
Since the good mother holds me still a child !
Good mother is bad mother unto me !
A worse were better ; yet no worse would I.
Heaven yield her for it, but in me put force
To weary her ears with one continuous prayer,

Until she let me fly discaged to sweep
In ever highering eagle-circles up
To the great Sun of Glory, and thence
swoop

Down upon all things base, and dash
them dead,
A knight of Arthur, working out his will,
To cleanse the wold Why, Gawain,
when he came

With Modred hither in the sumertime,
Ask'd me to tilt with him, the proven
knight

Modred for want of worthie was the
judge

Then I so shook him in the saddle, he
said,

"Thou hast half prevail'd agunst me,"
said so—he—

Tho' Modred biting his thin lips was mute,
For he is alway sullen what care I?"

And Gareth went, and hovering round
her chur

Ask'd, 'Mother, tho' ye count me still
the child,

Sweet mother, do ye love the child?'
She laugh'd,

'Thou art but a wild goose to question
it'

'Then, mother, an ye love the child,' he
said,

'Being a goose and rather tame than wild,
Hear the child's story' 'Yea, my well-
beloved,

An 'twere but of the goose and golden
eggs'

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling
eyes,

'Nay, nay, good mother, but this egg of
mine

Was finer gold than any goose can lay,
For this an Eagle, a royal Eagle, laid
Almost beyond eye reach, on such a palm
As glitters gilded in thy Book of Hours
And there was ever haunting round the
palm

A lusty youth, but poor, who often saw
The splendour sparkling from aloft, and
thought

"An I could climb and lay my hand upon
it,
Then were I wealthier than a leash of
kings"

But evei when he reach'd a hand to climb,
One, that had loved him from his child
hood, caught

And striv'd him, "Climb not lest thou
breake thy neck,

I chuse thee by my love," and so the boy,
Sweet mother, neither clomb, nor brake
his neck,

But breake his very heut in pining for it,
And past away'

To whom the mother said,
'True love, sweet son, had risk'd himself
and climb'd,
And handed down the golden treasure to
him'

And Gareth answer'd her with kindling
eyes,

'Gold? sud I gold?—ay then, why he,
or she,

Or whosoc'er it was, or hlf the world
I had ventur'd—had the thing I speake of
been

Mere gold—but this was ill of that true
steel,

Whciof they forged the brand Excalibur,
And lightnings ply'd about it in the
storm,

And all the little fowl were flunied at it,
And there were cuts and clashings in the
nest,

That sent him from his senses let me go.'

Then Bellicent bemoan'd herself and
said,

'Hast thou no pity upon my loneliness?
Lo, where thy father Lot beside the heath
Lies like a log, and all but smoulder'd
out'

For ever since when traitor to the King
He fought agunst him in the Bruons w u,
And Arthur gave him back his territory,
His age hath slowly droopl, and now lie,
there

A yet warm corpse, and yet unburiable,

No more ; nor sees, nor hears, nor speaks,
nor knows.
And both thy brethren are in Arthur's hall,
Albeit neither loved with that full love
I feel for thee, nor worthy such a love :
Stay therefore thou ; red berries charm
the bird,
And thee, mine innocent, the jousts, the
wars,
Who never knewest finger-ache, nor pang
Of wrench'd or broken limb—an often
chance
In those brain-stunning shocks, and
tourney-falls,
Frights to my heart ; but stay : follow
the deer
By these tall firs and our fast-falling burns ;
So make thy manhood mightier day by
day ;
Sweet is the chase : and I will seek thee
out
Some comfortable bride and fair, to grace
Thy climbing life, and cherish my prone
year,
Till falling into Lot's forgetfulness
I know not thee, myself, nor anything.
Stay, my best son ! ye are yet more boy
than man.

Then Gareth, 'An ye hold me yet for
child,
Hear yet once more the story of the child.
For, mother, there was once a King, like
ours.
The prince his heir, when tall and
marriageable,
Ask'd for a bride ; and thereupon the
King
Set two before him. One was fair,
strong, arm'd—
But to be won by force—and many men
Desired her ; one, good luck, no man
desired.
And these were the conditions of the
King :
That save he won the first by force, he
needs
Must wed that other, whom no man
desired,
A red-faced bride who knew herself so vile,

That evermore she long'd to hide herself,
Nor fronted man or woman, eye to eye—
Yea—some she cleaved to, but they died
of her.
And one—they call'd her Fame ; and
one,—O Mother,
How can ye keep me tether'd to you—
Shame !
Man am I grown, a man's work must I do.
Follow the deer ? follow the Christ, the
King,
Live pure, speak true, right wrong, follow
the King—
Else, wherefore born ?

To whom the mother said,
'Sweet son, for there be many who deem
him not,
Or will not deem him, wholly proven
King—
Albeit in mine own heart I knew him
King,
When I was frequent with him in my
youth,
And heard him Kingly speak, and doubted
him
No more than he, himself ; but felt him
mine,
Of closest kin to me : yet—wilt thou leave
Thine easeful biding here, and risk thine
all,
Life, limbs, for one that is not proven
King ?
Stay, till the cloud that settles round his
birth
Hath lifted but a little. Stay, sweet son.'

And Gareth answer'd quickly, 'Not
an hour,
So that ye yield me—I will walk thro'
fire,
Mother, to gain it—your full leave to
go.
Not proven, who swept the dust of ruin'd
Rome
From off the threshold of the realm, and
crush'd
The Idolaters, and made the people free ?
Who should be King save him who
makes us free ?'

So when the Queen, who long had
sought in vain
To break him from the intent to which
he grew,
Found her son's will unwaveringly one,
She answer'd craftily, 'Will ye walk this'
fie?
Who walks thro' fire will hardly heed the
smoke
Ay, go then, in ye must only one proof,
Before thou ask the King to make thee
knight,
Of thine obedience and thy love to me,
Thy mother,—I demand '

And Gareth cried,
'A hard one, or a hundred, so I go
Nay—quic' the proof to prove me to
the quic' "

But slowly spake the mother looking
at him,
'Prince, thou shalt go disguised to
Arthur's hall,
And hue thyself to serve for meats and
drinks
Among the scullions and the kitchen-
knaves,
And those that hand the dish across the
bar
Nor shalt thou tell thy name to anyone
And thou shalt sciv' a twelvemonth and
a day'

For so the Queen believed that when
her son
Beheld his only way to glory lead
Low down thro' villain kitchen-vassalage,
Her own true Gareth was too princely
proud
To pass thereby, so should he rest with
her,
Closed in her castle from the sound of
arms

Silent awhile was Gareth, then replied,
'The thrall in person may be free in soul,
And I shall see the jousts Thy son am I,
And since thou art my mother, must
obey
I therefore yield me fieely to thy will,

For hence will I, disguised, and hire myself
To seive with scullions and with kitchen
knaves,
Nor tell my name to any—no, not the
King'

Gareth awhile linger'd The mother's
eye
Full of the wistful few that he would go,
And turning towurd him whereso'er he
twin'd,
Perplexed his outward purpose, till in houn,
When waken'd by the wind which with
full voice
Swept bellowing thro' the darkness on to
dawn,
He rose, and out of slumber calling two
That still had tended on him from his
bath,
Before the wakeful mother heard him,
went

The three were clad like tillers of the
soil
Southward they set their faces The birds
made
Melody on branch, and melody in mid in
The damp hill slopes were quicken'd into
green,
And the live green had kindled into
flowers,
For it was past the time of Easterday

So, when their feet were planted on
the plun
That broden'd toward the base of Cance-
lot,
Fui off they saw the silver misty morn
Rolling her smoke about the Royal
mount,
That rose between the forest and the field
At times the summit of the high city
flash'd,
At times the spines and turrets half way
down
Pnick'd thro' the mist, at times the great
gate shone
Only, that open'd on the field below
Anon, the whole fair city had disappeu'd

Then those who went with Gareth were amazed,
One crying, 'Let us go no further, lord
Here is a city of Enchanters, built
By fany Kings' The second echo'd him,
'Lord, we have heard from our wise man
at home
To Northward, that this King is not the
King,
But only changeling out of Fairyland,
Who drave the heathen hence by sorcery
And Merlin's glamour' Then the first
again,
'Lord, there is no such city anywhere,
But all a vision'

Gareth answer'd them
With laughter, swearing he had glamour
now
In his own blood, his princedom, youth
and hopes,
To plunge old Merlin in the Arabian sea,
So push'd them all unwilling toward the
gate
And there was no gate like it under
heaven
For bluefoot on the keystone, which was
linc'd
And rippled like an ever fleeting wave,
The Lady of the Lake stood 'll her dress
Wept from her sides as water flowing away,
But like the cross her greet and goodly
arms
Stretch'd under all the cornice and
upheld
And drops of water fell from either hand,
And down from one a sword was hung,
from one
A conser, either worn with wind and
stoin',
And o'er her breast flouted the sacred fish,
And in the space to left of her, and right,
Were Arthur's wus in wend devices done,
New things and old co twisted, as if time
Were nothing, so inveterately, that men
Were giddy gazing there, and over all
High on the top were those thice Queens,
the friends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his
need

Then those with Gareth for so long a
space
Stared at the figures, that at last it seem'd
The dragon boughts and elvish emblem-
ings
Began to move, seethe, twine and curl
they call'd
To Gareth, 'Lord, the gateway is alive'
And Gareth likewise on them fixt his
eyes
So long, that ev'n to him they seem'd to
move
Out of the city a blast of music peal'd
Back from the gate started the three, to
whom
From out thereunder came an ancient
man,
Long-bearded, saying, 'Who be ye, my
sons?'

Then Gareth, 'We be tillers of the soil,
Who leaving shate in furrow come to see
The glories of our King but these, my
men,
(Your city moved so weirdly in the mist)
Doubt if the King be King at all, or come
From Fairyland, and whether this be built
By magic, and by fany Kings and Queens,
Or whether there be my city at all,
Or all a vision and this music now
Hath scared them both, but tell thou
these the truth,'

Then that old Seer made answer play-
ing on him
And saying, 'Son, I have seen the good
ship sul
Keel upward and mast downward in the
heavens,
And solid tunics topsy turvy in all
and here is truth, but an it please thee
not,
Take thou the truth as thou hast told it
me
For truly as thou sayest, a Fany King
And Fany Queens have built the city, son
They came from out a sacred mount un-
clift
Sownd the sunrise, each with harp in
hand,

And built it to the music of their harps
And as thou sayest it is enchanted, son,
For there is nothing in it as it seems
Saving the King, tho' some there be that hold

The King a shadow, and the city real
Yet take thou heed of him, so, so thou pass

Beneath this archway, then wilt thou become

A thiall to his enchantments, for the King
Will bind thee by such vows, as is a shame
A man should not be bound by, yet the which

No man can keep, but, so thou dread to swear,

Piss not beneath this gateway, but abide
Without, among the cattle of the field
For an ye heard a music, like enow
They are building still, seeing the city is built

To music, therefore never built at all,
And therefore built for ever'

Gareth spake
Anger'd, 'Old Master, reverence thine own beard

That looks as white as utter truth, and seems

Wellnigh as long as thou art statured tall!
Why mockest thou the stranger that hath been

To thee fair spoken?'

But the Seer replied,
'Know ye not then the Riddling of the Bards?

"Confusion, and illusion, and relation,
Elusion, and occasion, and evasion"?
I mock thee not but as thou mockest me,
And all that see thee, for thou art not who Thou seemest, but I know thee who thou art

And now thou goest up to mock the King,
Who cannot brook the shadow of any he'

Unmockingly the mocker ending here
Turn'd to the right, and past along the plain,
Whom Gareth looking after said, 'My men,

Our one white he sits like a little ghost
Here on the threshold of our enterprise
Let love be blamed for it, not she, nor I
Well, we will make amends'

With all good cheer
He spake and laugh'd, then enter'd with his twain

Camelot, a city of shadowy palaces
And stately, rich in emblem and the work
Of ancient kings who did their days in stone,

Which Merlin's hand, the Mage at Arthur's court,
Knowing all arts, had touch'd, and everywhere

At Arthur's ordinance, tipt with lessening perk
And pinnacle, and had made it spire to heaven

And e'er and anon a knight would pass
Outward, or inward to the hall his arms Clash'd, and the sound was good to Gareth's ear
And out of bower and casement shyly glanced

Eyes of pure women, wholesome stars of love,
And all about a healthful people slept
As in the presence of a glorious king

Then into hall Gareth ascending heard
A voice, the voice of Arthur, and behold
Far over heads in that long vaulted hall
The splendour of the presence of the King

Throned, and delivering doom — and look'd no more —

But felt his young heart hammering in his ears,

And thought, 'For this half shadow of a lie

The truthful King will doom me when I speak,'

Yet pressing on, tho' all in fear to find
Sir Gawain or Sir Modred, saw nor one
Nor other, but in all the listening eyes
Of those tall knights, that ringed about
the throne,
Clear honour shining like the dewy sun

Of dawn, and faith in then great King,
with pure

Affection, and the light of victory,
And glory gain'd, and evermore to gain

Then came a widow crying to the King,
'A boon, Sir King!' Thy father, Uther,
left

From my dead lord a field with violence
For howsoe'er at first he proffer'd gold,
Yet, for the field was pleasant in our eyes,
We yielded not, and then he left us of it
Perforce, and left us neithe^r gold nor field,

Said Arthur, 'Whether would ye?
gold or field?'

To whom the woman weeping, 'Nay, my
laid,
The field was pleasant in my husband's
eye'

And Arthur, 'Have thy pleasant field
again,
And thrice the gold for Uther's use
thereof,
According to the years No boon is here,
But justice, so thy say be proven true
Accused, who from the wrongs his father
did
Would shape himself a right!'

And while she past,
Came yet another widow crying to him,
'A boon, Sir King!' Thine enemy, King,
am I

With thine own hand thou slewest my
dear laid,

A knight of Uther in the Buons' war,
When Lot and many another rose and
fought

Against thee, saying thou wert basely
born

I held with these, and loathe to ask thee
aught

Yet lo! my husband's brother had my
son

Thrill'd in his castle, and hath starved
him dead

And standeth seized of that inheritance
Which thou that slewest the son hast left
the son

So tho' I scarce can ask it thee for hate,
Grant me some knight to do the battle
for me,
Kill the foul thief, and wic k me for my
son'

Then stode a good knight forward,
crying to him,
'A boon, Sir King!' I am her kinsman, I
Give me to right her wrong, and slay the
man'

Then came Sir Kay, the seneschal, and
cried,
'A boon, Sir King! ev'n that thou giant
hei none,
This railer, that hath mock'd thee in full
hall—
None, or the wholesome boon of gyve
and gag'

But Arthur, 'We sit King, to help the
wrong'd
Thio' all our realm The woman loves
her laid
Peace to thee, woman, with thy loves and
hates!
The kings of old had doom'd thee to the
flames,
Aurelius Emrys would have scourged thee
dead,
And Uther slit thy tongue but get thee
hence—
Lest that rough humour of the kings of
old

Return upon me! Thou that uts her kin,
Go likewise, lay him low and slay him
not,

But bring him here, that I may judge the
right,
According to the justice of the King
Then, be he guilty, by that deathless King
Who lived and died for men, the man
shall die'

Then came in hall the messenger of
Merk,
A name of civil sivom in the land,
The Cornish king In either hand he
boar
What dazled all, and shone fair oft in
shines

A field of charlock in the sudden sun
 Between two showers, a cloth of palest
 gold,
 Which down he laid before the thone,
 and knelt,
 Delivering, that his lord, the vassal king,
 Was ev'n upon his way to Camelot,
 For hiv'ng heard that Arthur of his gracie
 Had made his goodly cousin, Tustiam,
 knight,
 And, for himself wis of the gretter state,
 Being a king, he trusted his liege lord
 Would yield him this lage honour all the
 more,
 So pray'd him well to accept this cloth of
 gold,
 In token of true heart and fealty

Then Arthur cried to rend the cloth, to
 iend
 In pieces, and so cast it on the heuth
 An oak-tree shoulde'r'd there 'The
 goodly knight'
 What' shall the shield of Mairk stand
 among these?'
 Foi, midwiy down the side of that long
 hall
 A stately pile,—whereof along the front,
 Some blazon'd, some but cuven, and
 some blank,
 There ran a treble range of stony
 shields,—
 Rose, and high arching overbrow'd the
 heath
 And under every shield a knight was
 named
 For this was Arthur's custom in his hall,
 When some good knight had done one
 noble deed,
 His arms were carven only, but if twain
 His arms were blazon'd also, but if none
 The shield was blank and bare without a
 sign
 Saving the name beneath, and Gueth
 saw
 The shield of Gawain blazon'd rich and
 bright,
 And Modred's blank as death, and
 Arthur cried
 To rend the cloth and cast it on the hearth

‘Moile like ure we to recve him of his
 crown
 Then make him knight because men call
 him king
 The kings we found, ye know we stay'd
 their hands
 From war among themselves, but left
 them kings,
 Of whom were my bounteous, merciful,
 Truth speking, bive, good livers, them
 we enroll'd
 Among us, and they sit within our hall
 But Mairk hath tarnish'd the gret name
 of king,
 As Mairk would sully the low state of churil
 And, seeing he hath sent us cloth of gold,
 Retrun, and meet, and hold him from
 our eyes,
 Lest we should lyp him up in cloth of lead,
 Silenced for eva—coven—r man of
 plots,
 Craft, poisonous counsels, wayside am
 bushings—
 No fault of thine let Kry the seneschal
 Look to thy wants, and send thee satis
 fied—
 Accursed, who strikes nor lets the hand
 be seen’

 And many another suppliant crying
 came
 With noise of raving wrought by burst
 and man,
 And cvermoore r knight would ride awy

 Last, Gueth leaning both hands heavily
 Down on the shouleirs of the twain, his
 men,
 Appioach'd between them toward the
 King, and ask'd,
 ‘A boon, Sir King (his voice was all
 ashamed),
 For see ye not how weyk and hunger worn
 I seem—leaning on these? grant me to
 serve
 For meat and drinck among thy kitchen
 knaves
 A twelvemonth and a day, nor seek my
 name
 Hereafter I will fight’

To him the King,
A goodly youth and worth a goodlier
boon!
But so thou wilt no goodlier, then must
Kay,
The master of the meats and drinks, be
thine'

He rose and past, then Kay, a man
of mien
Wun sallow as the plant that feels itself
Root bitten by white lichen,

'Lo ye now!
This fellow hath broken from some Abbey,
white,
God wot, he had not beef and brewis knowy,
However that might chance! but an he
work,
Like any pigeon will I cram his crop,
And sleeker shall he shine than any hog.'

Then Lancelot standing neu, 'Sir
Seneschal,
Sleuth-hound thou knowest, and gray,
and all the hounds,
A hoise thou knowest, a man thou dost
not know
Browd brows and fair, rfluent hur and fine,
High nose, a nostril large and fine, and
hands
Large, sun and fine!—Some young lad's
mystery—
But, or from sheepcot or king's hall, the boy
Is noble natured Treat him with all
grace,
Lest he should come to shame thy judging
of him,'

Then Kay, 'Whrt murmuwest thou of
mystery?
Think ye this fellow will poison the
King's dish?
Nay, for he speake too fool like mystery!
But, an the lad were noble, he had ask'd
For hoise and umour sun and fine,
soothoof!
Sun Fine face, Sun Fair-hands? but see
thou to it
That thine own fineness, Lancelot, some
fine dry
Undo thee not—and leave my man to me,'

So Gareth all for glory underwent
The sooty yoke of kitchen vassalage,
Ate with young lads his portion by the
door,
And couch'd it night with gummy kitchen-
knaves
And Lancelot ever spake him pleasantly,
But Kay the seneschal who loved him not
Would hustle and harry him, and labour
him
Beyond his comrade of the heath, and set
To tun the broach, diaw water, or hew
wood,
Or grossest tasks, and Gareth bow'd
himself
With all obedience to the King, and
wrought
All kind of service with a noble erse
That graced the lowliest act in doing it
And when the thralls had talk among
themselves,
And one would praise the love that linkt
the King
And Lancelot—how the King had sived
his life
In battle twice, and Lancelot once the
King's—
For Lancelot was the first in Tournament,
But Arthur mightiest on the battle field—
Gueth was glad. O if some other told,
How once the wandering forester it down,
Fou over the blue tans and hazy seas,
On Cicer Eiyri's highest found the King,
Anakabibe, of whom the Prophet spake,
'He passes to the Isle Avilon,
He passes and is heal'd and cannot die'—
Gareth was glad But if their talk were
foul,
Then would he whistle rapid as any lark,
Or carol some old roundelay, and so loud
That first they mock'd, but, after, receiv-
enced him
Or Gueth telling some prodigious tale
Of knights, who sliced a red life bubbling
way
Iho' twenty folds of twisted dragon, held
All in a grip mouth'd circle his good mites
Lying or sitting round him, idle hands,
Chum'd, till Sun Kay, the seneschal,
would come

Blustering upon them, like a sudden wind
Among dead leaves, and drive them all
apart

Or when the thralls had spoilt among
themselves,

So there were my trial of mastery,
He, by two yuds in casting bru or stone
Was counted best, and if there chanced
a joust,

So that Sir Kay nodded him leave to go,
Would huiry thither, and when he siv
the knights

Clash like the coming and retuning wave,
And the spear spring, and good horse
reel, the boy

Was half beyond himself for ecstasy

So for a month he wrought among the
thralls,
But in the weeks that follow'd, the good
Queen,

Repentant of the wold she made him
sweat,
And saddening in her childless castle, sent,
Between the in crescent and de cresent
moon,

Arms for her son, and loosed him from
his vow

This, Gareth hearing from a squire of
Lot
With whom he used to play at tourney
once,
When both were childien, and in lonely
haunts

Would scratch a ragged oval on the sand,
And each at either dash from either end—
Shame never made guil dedder than Gareth
joy

He laugh'd, he sprang ‘Out of the
smoke, at once

I leap from Satan's foot to Peter's knee—
These news be mine, none other's—nay,
the King's—

Descend into the city 'whereon he sought
The King alone, and found, and told him
all

‘I have stagger'd thy strong Gawayn in
a tilt

For pastime, yet, he said it joust can I

Make me thy knight—in secret ! let my
name

Be hidd'n, and give me the first quest, I
spring
Like flame from ashes !

Here the King's calm eye
Fall on, and check'd, and made him flush,
and bow

Lowly, to kiss his hand, who answer'd
him,

‘Son, the good mother let me know thce
here,
And sent her wish that I would yield thee
thine

Make thee my knight? my knights are
sworn to vows

Of utter hardihood, utter gentleness,
And, loving, utter futhfulness, in love,
And uttermost obedience to the King'

Then Gareth, lightly springing from
his knus,

‘My King, for hardihood I can promise
thee

For uttermost obedience make demand
Of whom ye give me to, the Sneschal,
No mellow master of the meits and
dunks !

And as for love, God wot, I love not yet,
But love I shall, God willing ’

And the King—
‘Make thee my knight in secret? yea,
but he,

Our noblest brother, and our truest man,
And one with me in all, he needs must
know ’

‘Let Lancelot know, my King, let
Lancelot know,
Thy noblest and thy truest !’

And the King—
‘But wherefore would ye men should
wonder at you?

Nay, rather for the sake of me, then
King,

And the deed's sake my knighthood do
the deed,

Than to be noised of ’

Merrily Gareth ask'd,
 'Have I not earn'd my cake in baking
 of it ?'

Let be my name until I make my name,
 My deeds will speak it is but for a day,
 So with a kindly hand on Gareth's arm
 Smiled the great King, and half unwillingly

Loving his lusty youthhood yielded to him

Then, after summoning Lancelot privily,
 'I have given him the first quest he is not proven

Look therefore when he calls for this in hall,

Thou get to horse and follow him far away
 Cover the lions on thy shield, and see
 Fair as thou mayest, he be not taken nor slain'

Then that same day therel past into the hall

A damsel of high lineage, and a brow May-blossom, and a cheek of apple blossom,
 Hawk eyes, and lightly was her slender nose

Tip tilted like the petal of a flower,
 She into hall past with her pike and cuir,

'O King, for thou hast driven the foe without,

See to the foe within ! bridge, ford, beset
 By bandits, everyone that owns a tower
 The Lord for half a league Why sit ye there ?

Rest would I not, Sir King, an I were king,
 Till ev'n the loneliest hold we're all as free
 From cursed bloodshed, as thine altar cloth

From that best blood it is a sin to spill '

'Comfort thyself,' said Arthur, 'I no mine

Rest so my knighthood keep the vows they swoic,

The wastest moorland of our realm shall be

Safe, damscl, is the conter of this hall
 What is thy name? thy need?'

'My name?' she said—
 'Lynette my name, noble, my need, a knight

To combat for my sister, Lyonois,
 A lady of high lineage, of great lands,
 And comely, yea, and comelier than myself

She lives in Castle Peilous a river
 Runs in three loops about hei living place,

And o'er it aie three passings, and three knights

Defend the passings, biethien, and a fourth

And of that four the mightiest, holds hei stay'd

In her own castle, and so besieges hei
 To break hei will, and make her wed with him

And but delays his purport till thou send
 To do the battle with him, thy chief man
 Sir Lancelot whom he trusts to overthow,
 Then wed, with glory but she will not wed

Sure whom she loveth, or a holy life
 Now therelsoe have I come for Lancelot'

Then Arthur mindful of Sir Guethask'd,
 'Damsel, ye know this Order lives to crush

All wrongers of the Realm But say, these four,
 Who be they? What the fashion of the men?'

'They be of foolish fashion, O Sir King,
 The fashion of that old knight errant
 Who ride abroad and do but what they will,
 Comiteous or bestial from the moment,
 such As have nor law nor king, and three of these

Proud in their fantasy call themselves the Day,

Morning-Star, and Noon Sun, and Evening Star,

Being strong fools, and never a whit more wise

The fourth, who alway rideth aim'd in black.,

A huge man-beast of boundless savagery.
He names himself the Night and oftener
Death,

And wears a helmet mounted with a skull,
And bears a skeleton figured on his arms,
To show that who may slay or scape the
three

Slain by himself shall enter endless night.
And all these four befools, but mighty men,
And therefore am I come for Lancelot.'

Hereat Sir Gareth call'd from where he
rose,
A head with kindling eyes above the
throne,
'A boon, Sir King—this quest!' then—
for he mark'd
Kay near him groaning like a wounded
bull—
'Yea, King, thou knowest thy kitchen-
knaves am I,
And mighty thro' thy meats and drinks
am I,
And I can topple over a hundred such.
Thy promise, King,' and Arthur glancing
at him,
Brought down a momentary brow.
'Rough, sudden,
And pardonable, worthy to be knight—
Go therefore,' and all hearers were amazed.

But on the damsel's forehead shame,
pride, wrath
Slew the May-white: she lifted either arm,
'Fie on thee, King! I ask'd for thy chief
knight,
And thou hast given me but a kitchen-
knaver.'
Then ere a man in hall could stay her,
turn'd,
Fled down the lane of access to the King,
Took horse, descended the slope street,
and past
The weird white gate, and paused without,
beside
The field of tourney, murmuring 'kitchen-
knaver.'

Now two great entries open'd from the
hall,
At one end one, that gave upon a range

Of level pavement where the King would
pace

At sunrise, gazing over plain and wood;
And down from this a lordly stairway
sloped

Till lost in blowing trees and tops of
towers;

And out by this main doorway past the
King.

But one was counter to the hearth, and
rose

High that the highest-crested helm could
ride

Therethro' nor graze: and by this entry
fled

The damsel in her wrath, and on to this
Sir Gareth strode, and saw without the
door

King Arthur's gift, the worth of half a
town,

A warhorse of the best, and near it stood
The two that out of north had follow'd
him:

This bare a maiden shield, a casque; that
held

The horse, the spear; whereat Sir Gareth
loosed

A cloak that dropt from collar-bone to
heel,

A cloth of roughest web, and cast it down,
And from it like a fuel-smother'd fire,
That lookt half-dead, brake bright, and
flash'd as those

Dull-coated things, that making slide
apart

Their dusk wing-cases, all beneath there
burns

A jewell'd harness, ere they pass and fly.
So Gareth ere he parted flash'd in arms.
Then as he donn'd the helm, and took the
shield

And mounted horse and graspt a spear, of
grain

Storm-strengthen'd on a windy site, and
tipt

With trenchant steel, around him slowly
prest

The people, while from out of kitchen came
The thralls in throng, and seeing who had
work'd

Lustier than any, and whom they could
but love,
Mounted in arms, threw up their caps and
cried,
God bless the King, and all his fellow
ship !
And on thro' lanes of shouting Gareth rode
Down the slope street, and past without
the gate

So Gareth past with joy, but as the sun
Pluckt from the cur he fights with, ere his
cause
Be cool'd by fighting, follows, being
named,
His owner, but rememb'res nill, and growls
Rememb'reng, so Sir Kay beside the door
Mutter'd in scowl of Gareth whom he used
To harry and hustle

' Bound upon a quest
With horse and arms—the King hath past
his time—
My scullion knave ! Thialls to your work
agun,
For in your fine be low ye kindle mine !
Will there be down in West and eve in
East ?
Begone !—my knave !—belike and like
enow
Some old head blow not heeded in his
youth
So shook his wits they wander in his
prime—
Crazed ! How the villain listed up his
voice,
Nor shamed to bawl himself a kitchen
knav
Tut he was tame and meek enow with
me,
Till peacock'd up with Lancelot's noticing
Well—I will stir my loud knave, and
lairn
Whethur he know me for his master yet
Out of the smoke he came, and so my
lance
Hold, by God's grace, he shall into the
mire—
Thence, if the King awaken from his curse,
Into the smoke again '

But Lancelot said,
' Kay, wherefore wilt thou go against the
King,
For that did never he whereon ye rail,
But ever meekly served the King in thee ?
Abide take counsel, for this lad is great
And lusty, and knowing both of lance and
sword '
' Tut, tell not me,' said Kay, ' ye are
overfine
To mar stout knaves with foolish courtesies '
Then mounted, on thio' silent faces rode
Down the slope city, and out beyond the
gate
But by the field of tourney lingering yet
Mutter'd the damsel, ' Wherefore did the
King
Scorn me ? for, were Sir Lancelot lackt,
at least
He might have yielded to me one of those
Who tilt for lady's love and glory here,
Rather than—O sweet heaven ! O fie
upon him—
His kitchen knave '
To whom Sir Gareth drew
(And there were none but few goodlier
than he)
Shining in arms, ' Damsel, the quest is mine
Lead, and I follow ' She thereat, as one
that smells a foul flesh'd vagabond in the
holt,
And deems it caisson of some woodland
thing,
Oi shrew, oi weascl, nipt her slender nose
With petulant thumb and finger, shrilling,
' Hence !
Avoid, thou smellest all of kitchen-grease
And look who comes behind,' for there
was Kay
' Knowest thou not me ? thy master ? I
am Kay
We lack thee by the haith '
And Gareth to him,
' Master no more ! too well I know thee,
I—
The most ungentle knight in Arthur's
hall '

'Have at thee then,' said Kay : they shock'd, and Kay
Fell-shoulder-slipt, and Gareth cried again,
'Lead, and I follow,' and fast away she fled.

But after sod and shingle ceased to fly
Behind her, and the heart of her good horse
Was nigh to burst with violence of the beat,
Perforce she stay'd, and overtaken spoke.

'What doest thou, scullion, in my fellowship ?
Deem'st thou that I accept thee aught the more
Or love thee better, that by some device
Full cowardly, or by mere unhappiness,
Thou hast overthrown and slain thy master—thou !—
Dish-washer and broach-turner, loon !—
to me
Thou smeltest all of kitchen as before.'

'Damsel,' Sir Gareth answer'd gently,
 'say
Whate'er ye will, but whatsoe'er ye say,
I leave not till I finish this fair quest,
Or die therefore.'

'Ay, wilt thou finish it ?
Sweet lord, how like a noble knight he talks !
The listening rogue hath caught the manner of it.
But, knave, anon thou shalt be met with, knave,
And then by such a one that thou for all
The kitchen brewis that was ever supt
Shalt not once dare to look him in the face.'

'I shall assay,' said Gareth with a smile
That madden'd her, and away she flash'd again
Down' the long avenues of a boundless wood,
And Gareth following was again beknayed.

'Sir Kitchen-knave, I have miss'd the only way
Where Arthur's men are set along the wood ;

The wood is nigh as full of thieves as leaves :
If both be slain, I am rid of thee ; but yet,
Sir Scullion, canst thou use that spit of thine ?
Fight, an thou canst : I have miss'd the only way.'

So till the dusk that follow'd evensong
Rode on the two, reviler and reviled ;
Then after one long slope was mounted,
 saw,
Bowl-shaped, thro' tops of many thousand pines
A gloomy-gladed hollow slowly sink
To westward—in the deeps whereof a mere,
Round as the red eye of an Eagle-owl,
Under the half-dead sunset glared ; and shouts
Ascended, and there brake a servingman Flying from out of the black wood, and crying,
'They have bound my lord to cast him in the mere.'
Then Gareth, 'Bound am I to right the wrong'd,
But straitlier bound am I to bide with thee.'
And when the damsels spake contemptuously,
'Lead, and I follow,' Gareth cried again,
'Follow, I lead !' so down among the pines
He plunged ; and there, blackshadow'd nigh the mere,
And mid-thigh-deep in bulrushes and reed,
Saw six tall men haling a seventh along,
A stone about his neck to drown him in it.
Three with good blows he quieted, but three
Fled thro' the pines ; and Gareth loosed the stone
From off his neck, then in the mere beside Tumbled it ; oilily bubbled up the mere.
Last, Gareth loosed his bonds and on free feet
Set him, a stalwart Baron, Arthur's friend.

‘Well that ye came, or else these caitiff
rogues
Had wreak’d themselves on me ; good
cause is theirs
To hate me, for my wont hath ever been
To catch my thief, and then like vermin
here
Drown him, and with a stone about his
neck ;
And under this wan water many of them
Lie rotting, but at night let go the stone,
And rise, and flickering in a grimly light
Dance on the mere. Good now, ye have
saved a life
Worth somewhat as the cleanser of this
wood.
And fain would I reward thee worship-
fully.
What guerdon will ye?’

Gareth sharply spake,
‘None ! for the deed’s sake have I done
the deed,
In uttermost obedience to the King.
But wilt thou yield this damsel harbour-
age ?’

Whereat the Baron saying, ‘I well
believe
You be of Arthur’s Table,’ a light laugh
Broke from Lynette, ‘Ay, truly of a truth,
And in a sort, being Arthur’s kitchen-
knavе !—
But deem not I accept thee aught the
more,
Scullion, for running sharply with thy spit
Down on a rout of craven foresters.
A thresher with his flail had scatter’d them.
Nay—for thou smellest of the kitchen
still.
But an this lord will yield us harbourage,
Well.’

So she spake. A league beyond the
wood,
All in a full-fair manor and a rich,
His towers where that day a feast had
been
Held in high hall, and many a viand left,
And many a costly cake, received the
three.

And there they placed a peacock in his
pride
Before the damsel, and the Baron set
Gareth beside her, but at once she rose.

‘Meseems, that here is much dis-
courtesy,
Setting this knave, Lord Baron, at my side.
Hear me—this morn I stood in Arthur’s
hall,
And pray’d the King would grant me
Lancelot
To fight the brotherhood of Day and
Night—

The last a monster unsubduable
Of any save of him for whom I call’d—
Suddenly bawls this frontless kitchen-
knavе,
“The quest is mine ; thy kitchen-knavе
am I,
And mighty thro’ thy meats and drinks
am I.”

Then Arthur all at once gone mad replies,
“Go therefore,” and so gives the quest
to him—
Him—here—a villain fitter to stick swine
Than ride abroad redressing women’s
wrong,
Or sit beside a noble gentlewoman.’

Then half-ashamed and part-amazed,
the lord
Now look’d at one and now at other, left
The damsel by the peacock in his pride,
And, seating Gareth at another board,
Sat down beside him, ate and then began.

‘Friend, whether thou be kitchen-
knavе, or not,
Or whether it be the maiden’s fantasy,
And whether she be mad, or else the
King,
Or both or neither, or thyself be mad,
I ask not : but thou strikest a strong
stroke,
For strong thou art and goodly there-
withal,
And saver of my life ; and therefore now,
For here be mighty men to joust with,
weigh

Whether thou wilt not with thy damsel
back

To crave again Sir Lancelot of the King
Thy pardon, I but speak for thine avail,
The saver of my life'

And Gareth said,
'Full pardon, but I follow up the quest,
Despite of Day and Night and Death and
Hell'

So when, next morn, the lord whose
life he saved
Had, some brief space, convey'd them on
then way
And left them with God speed, Sir Gareth
spake,
'Lead, and I follow' Haughtily she
replied,

'I fly no more I allow thee for an
hour
Lion and stoat have isled together, knave,
In time of flood Nay, furthermore,
methinks
Some ruth is mine for thee Back wilt
thou, fool?
For hard by here is one will overthrow
And sly thee then will I to court agun,
And shame the King for only yielding
me
My champion from the ashes of his health'

To whom Sir Gareth unswier'd cou-
teously,
'Say thou thy say, and I will do my deed
Allow me for mine hour, and thou wilt
find

My fortunes all as full as hers who lay
Among the ashes and wedded the King's
son'

Then to the shone of one of those long
loops
Wheretho' the serpent river coil'd, they
came
Rough thicketed were the banks and
steep, the stream
Full, narrow, this a budge of single arc
Took at a leap, and on the further side
Arose a silk pavilion, gay with gold

In stucks and rays, and all Lent lily in
hue,

Sive that the dome was purple, and above,
Crimson, a slender banneret fluttering
And therebefore the lawless warrio'r paced
Unarm'd, and calling, 'Damsel, is this
he,

The champion thou hast brought from
Arthur's hall?

For whom we let thee pass' 'Nay, nay,'
she sud,

'Sir Morning Star! The King in utter
scorn

Of thee and thy much folly hath sent thee
here

His kitchen-knave and look thou to
thyself

See that he fall not on thee suddenly,
And sly thee unrum'd he is not knight
but I have'

Then at his call, 'O daughters of the
Dawn,

And servants of the Morning Star, up-
front,

Arm me, from out the silken curtain folds
Bare-footed and bare-headed three fair
girls

In gilt and rosy rument came their feet
In dewy grasses glisten'd, and the hir
All over glanced with dewdrop or with
gem

Like sparkles in the stony Avanturine
These arm'd him in blue arms, and gave
a shild

Blue also, and thereon the morning star
And Gareth silent gized upon the knight,
Who stood a moment, ere his hore was
brought,

Gloiring, and in the stream bencath him
shone

Immingled with Heaven's azure waver-
ingly,

The gay pavilion and the naked feet,
His arms, the rosy iament, and the star

Then she that witch'd him, 'Wherefore
stare ye so?

Thou shrikest in thy fear their yet is
time

Flee down the valley before he get to
horse
Who will cry shame? Thou art not
knight but knave'

Said Gareth, 'Damsel, whether knave
or knight,
Far liefer had I fight a score of times
Than hear thee so missay me and revile
Fair wrods were best for him who fights
for thee,
But truly foul we better, for they send
That strength of anger thro' mine arms,
I know
That I shall overthrow him'

And he that bore
The stur, being mounted, cried from o'er
the bridge,
'Akitchen knave, and sent in scorn of me!
Such fight not I, but answer scorn with
scorn
For this were shame to do him furthei
wrong
Thun set him on his feet, and take his
horse
And aims, and so return him to the
King
Come, therefore, leave thy lady lightly,
knavae
Avoid for it beseemeth not a knave
To ride with such a lady'

'Dog, thou liest
I sprung from lofuer lineage than thine
own'
He spake, and all at fiery speed the two
Shoal'd on the cential bridge, and either
spear
Bent but not brake, and either knight at
once,
Hul'd as a stone from out of a catapult
Beyond his horse's crupper and the bridge,
Fell, as if dead, but quickly rose and
drew,
And Gareth lash'd so fiercely with his
brand
He drove his enemy backward down the
bridge,
The damsel crying, 'Well-stricken,
kitchen knave!'

Till Gareth's shield was cloven, but one
stroke
Laid him that clove it grovelling on the
ground

Then cried the fall'n, 'Take not my
life I yield'
And Gaieth, 'So this damsel ask it of me
Good—I accord it easily as a grace'
She reddening, 'Insolent scullion I of
thee?
I bound to thee for any favour ask'd'
'Then shall he die' And Gareth there
unlaced

His helmet as to slay him, but she shrik'd,
'Be not so hardy, scullion, as to slay
One noblei than thyself' 'Damsel, thy
charge

Is an abounding pleasure to me Knight,
Thy life is thine at her command Aise
And quickly pass to Aithui's hall, and say
His kitchen knave hath sent thee See
thou crave

His pardon for thy breaking of his laws
Myself, when I return, will plead for thee
Thy shield is mine—farewell, and,
damsel, thou,
Lead, and I follow'

And fast away she fled
Then when he came upon her, spake,
'Methought,
Knavae, when I watch'd thee stalking on
the bridge
The savour of thy kitchen came upon me
A little sunthier but the wind hath
changed
I scent it twenty-fold' And then she sang,
'"O morning star" (not that tall felon there)
Whom thou by sorcery or unhappiness
Or some device, hast foully overthown),
"O morning star that smilest in the blue,
O star, my morning dream hath proven
true,
Smile sweetly, thou 'my love hath smiled
on me"

'But thou begone, take counsel, and
away,
For hard by here is one that guards a
ford—

The second brother in then fool's prunable—
Will pay thee all thy wages, and to boot
Care not for shame thou art not knight
but knave'

To whom Sir Gareth answer'd, laughingly,
'Parables? Hear a parable of the knave
When I was kitchen knave among the rest
Fierce was the heirth, and one of my
comates
Own'd a rough dog, to whom he cast his
coat,
"Guard it," and there was none to meddle
with it
And such a coat art thou, and thee the
King
Gave me to guard, and such a dog am I,
To woty, and not to flee—and—knight
or knave—
The knave that doth thee service as full
knight
Is all as good, meseems, as any knight
Toward thy sister's freeing'

'Ay, Sir Knave'
Ay, knave, because thou stukest as a
knight,
Being but knave, I hate thee all the more'

'For damsel, you should worship me
the more,
That, being but knave, I throw thine
enemies'

'Ay, ay,' she said, 'but thou shalt meet
thy match'

So when they touch'd the second river
loop,
Huge on a huge red hoise, and all in mail
Burnish'd to blinding, shone the Noonday
Sun
Beyond a raging shallow As if the flower,
That blows a globe of after arrowlets,
Ten thousand-fold had grown, flash'd the
fierce shield,
All sun, and Gareth's eyes had flying
blots
Before them when he turn'd from watching
him

He from beyond the roaring shallow
roar'd,
'What doest thou, brother, in my marches
here?'

And she athwart the shallow shill'd agun,
'Here is a kitchen-knave from Aithur's
hall

Hath overthrown thy brother, and hath
his arms'

'Ugh!' cried the Sun, and vizoring up a
ied

And cipher face of rounded foolishness,
Push'd house across the foamings of the
ford,

Whom Gareth met midstream no room
was there

For lance or tourney skill four strokes
they struck

With sword, and these were mighty, the
new knight

I had seen he might be shamed, but as the
Sun

Heaved up a ponderous arm to stir e the
fish,

The hoof of his horse slipt in the stream,
the stream

Descended, and the Sun was wash'd awy

Then Gareth laid his lance athwart the
ford,
So diuw him home, but he that fought
no more,
As being all bone-batter'd on the rock,
Yielded, and Gareth sent him to the
King

'Myself when I return will plead for thee,
'I ead, and I follow' Quietly she led
'Hath not the good wind, dumsel, changed
again?'

'Nay, not a point nor art thou victor
here

There lies a ridge of slate across the ford,
His horse thereon stumbled—ay, for I
saw it

'"O Sun" (not this strong fool whom
thou, Sir Knave,
I hast overthrown tho'mere unhappiness),
"O Sun, that wakenest all to bliss or
pam,"

O moon, that layest all to sleep again,
Shine sweetly twice my love hath smiled
on me ”

‘What knowest thou of lovesong or of
love?
Nay, nay, God wot, so thou werst nobly
born,
Thou hast a pleasant presence Yea,
perchance,—

“O dewy flowers that open to the
sun,
O dewy flowers that close when day is
done,
Blow sweetly twice my love hath smiled
on me ”

‘What knowest thou of flowers, except,
belike,
To garnish meats with? hath not our
good King
Who lent me thee, the flower of kitchen
dom,
A foolish love for flowers? what stick ye
round
The pasty? wherewithal deck the bou’s
head?
Flowers? nay, the bou hath rosemaryes
and bay

“O buds, that waible to the morning
sky,
O buds that warble as the day goes by,
Sing sweetly twice my love hath smiled
on me ”

‘What knowest thou of birds, lark,
mavis, meile,
Linnet? what dream ye when they utter
forth
May-music growing with the growing
light,
Their sweet sun worship? these be for the
sun
(So runs thy fancy) these be for the spit,
Larding and lusting See thou have not
now
Lured thy last, except thou turn and fly
There stands the thrid fool of them
illegory ’

For there beyond a bidge of treble
bow,
All in a rose-red from the west, and all
Naked it seem’d, and glowing in the broad
Deep dimpled cuient underneath, the
knight,
That named himself the Star of Evening,
stood

And Gareth, ‘Wherefore waits the
madman there
Naked in open dayshin?’ ‘Nay,’ she
cried,
‘Not naked, only wapt in harden’d skins
That fit him like his own, and so ye cleave
His armoir off him, these will turn the
blade ’

Then the thrid brother shouted o’er the
bridge,
‘O brother star, why shine ye here so low?
Thy waird is higher up but have ye slun
The damsel’s champion?’ and the damsel
cried,

‘No star of thine, but shot from Arthur’s
heaven
With all disaster unto thine and thee!
For both thy younger brethren have gone
down
Before this youth, and so wilt thou, Sir
Star,
Ait thou not old?’

Old, damsel, old and haid,
Old, with the might and breath of twenty
boys’,
Said Gueth, ‘Old, and over-bold in
brag!
But that same strength which thiew the
Morning Star
Can throw the Evening ’

Then that other blew
A hard and deadly note upon the horn
‘Appioach and aim me!’ With slow
steps from out
An old storm breten, russet, many sturn d
Pvilon, forth a gizzled damsel came,
And aim’d him in old arms, and brought
a helm

With but a drying evergreen for crest,
And gave a shield whereon the Star of
Even
Half tainish'd and half bright, his em-
blem, shone
But when it glitter'd o'er the saddle bow,
They madly hul'd together on the budge,
And Gareth overthrew him, lighted, drew,
There met him drawn, and overthrew him
again,
But up like fire he started and is oft
As Gareth brought him grovelling on his
knees,
So many a time he vaulted up again,
Till Gareth panted hard, and his great
heart,
Foredooming all his trouble was in vain,
Labour'd within him, for he seem'd as one
That all in later, sadder age begins
To war against ill uses of a life,
But these from all his life arise, and cry,
'Thou hast made us lords, and canst not
put us down'
He half despairs, so Gareth seem'd to
strike
Vainly, the damsel clamouring all the
while,
'Well done, knave knight, well strucken,
O good knight knave—
O knave, as noble as any of all the
knights—
Shame me not, shame me not I have
prophesied—
Strike, thou art worthy of the Table
Round—
His arms are old, he trusts the harden'd
skin—
Strike—strike—the wind will never
change again,
And Gareth hearing ever stronglier smote,
And hew'd great pieces of his armou off
him,
But lash'd in vain against the harden'd
skin,
And could not wholly bring him under,
more
Than loud Southwesterns, rolling ridge
on ridge,
The buoy that rides at sea, and dips and
springs

For ever, till at length Sir Gareth's brand
Clash'd his, and biale it utterly to the
hilt
'I have thee now,' but forth that other
sprang,
And, all unknightlike, writhed his wry
aims
Around him, till he felt, despite his mail,
Strangled, but straining ev'n his uttermost
Crest, and so hurl'd him headlong o'er the
bridge
Down to the river, sink or swim, and
cued,
'Lord, and I follow'

But the damsel said,
'I lead no longer, ride thou at my side
Thou art the kingliest of all kitchen-
knaves

"O trefoil, sparkling on the rainy
plum,
O rainbow with three colours after rain,
Shine sweetly thence my love hath smiled
on me "

'Sir,—and, good faith, I fum had
added—Knight,
But that I heard thee call thyself a
knight,
Shamed mi I that I so rebuked, reviled,
Missud thee, noble I am, and thought
the King
Scorn'd me and mine, and now thy
pardon, friend,
For thou hast ever answer'd courteously,
And wholly bold thou art, and much
wical
As any of Arthur's best, but, being knav,
Hast mazed my wit I marvel what thou
art

'Damsel,' he said, 'you be not all to
blame,
Siving that you mistrusted our good King
Would handle scorn, or yield you, asl ing,
one
Not fit to cope your quest You sud
your say,
Mine answer was my deed Good sooth'
I hold

He scarce is knight, yea but half-man,
nor meet
To fight for gentle damsel, he, who lets
His heat be stir'd with any foolish heat
At any gentle damsel's waywardness
Shamed? care not! thy foul sayings
fought for me
And seeing now thy words are fair,
methinks
There rides no knight, not Lancelot, his
great self,
Hath foice to quell me'

Nigh upon that hour
When the lone hein forgets his melancholy,
Lets down his other leg, and stretching
dreams
Of goodly supper in the distant pool,
Then turn'd the noble damsel smiling at
him,
And told him of a cavern hard at hand,
Where bread and baken meats and good
red wine
Of Southland, which the Lady Lyonors
Had sent her coming champion, waited
him

Anon they past i narrow comb wherein
Weie slabs of rock with figures, knights
on hoise
Sculptured, and deckt in slowly-wining
hues
'Sir Knave, my knight, i heimit once
was here,
Whose holy hand hath fashion'd on the
rock
The war of Time against the soul of man
And yon four fools have suck'd then alle-
gory
From these damp walls, and taken but
the form
Know ye not these?' and Gareth lookt
and read—
In letters like to those the vexillary
Hath left craig-caiven o'er the streaming
Gelt—
'PHOSPHORUS,' then 'MLRIDILS'—
'HESPERUS'—
'NOV'—'MORS,' beneath five figures,
aimed men,

Slab after slab, their faces forward all,
And running down the Soul, a Shape that
fled
With broken wings, torn raiment and
loose han,
For help and shelter to the heimit's cave
'Follow the faces, and we find it Look,
Who comes behind?'

For one—delay'd at first
Thio' helping back the dislocated Kay
To Camelot, then by what thereafter
chanced,
The damsel's headlong euoi thro' the
wood—
Sir Lancelot, having swum the river-
loops—
His blue shield lions cover'd—softly diew
Behind the twain, and when he saw the
star
Gleam, on Sir Gareth's turning to him,
cried,
'Stay, felon knight, I avenge me for my
fiend'
And Gareth crying prick'd against the cry,
But when they closed—in a moment—at
one touch
Of that skill'd speai, the wonder of the
world—
Went sliding down so easily, and fell,
That when he found the grass within his
hands
He laugh'd, the laughter juid upon
Lynette
Haishly she ask'd him, 'Shamed and
overthrown,
And tumbled back into the kitchen-knave,
Why laugh ye? that ye blew you boast
in vain?'
'Nay, noble damsel, but that I, the son
Of old King Lot and good Queen Belli-
cent,
And victor of the bridges and the foid,
And knight of Arthur, heic he thiown by
whom
I know not, all thro' mere unhappiness—
Device and sorcery and unhappiness—
Out, sword, we aie thiown!' And
Lancelot answer'd, 'Prince,
O Gareth—tho' the mere unhappiness

Of one who came to help thee, not to
harm,
Lancelot, and all as glad to find thee
whole,
As on the day when Arthur knighted him '

Then Gareth, 'Thou—Lancelot!—
thine the hand
That thiew me? An some chance to mu
the boist
Thy brethren of thee make—which could
not chance—
Had sent thee down before a lesser spou,
Shamed had I been, and sad—O Lancelot
—thou '

Wherat the maiden, petulant, 'Lance
lot,
Why came ye not, when call'd? and
wherefore now
Come ye, not call'd? I gloried in my
knav,
Who being still rebuked, would unswi
still
Courteous as any knight—but now, if
knight,
The marvel dies, and leaves me fool'd
and trick'd,
And only wondering wherefore play'd
upon
And doubtful whether I and mine be
scorn'd
Where should be truth if not in Arthur's
hall,
In Arthur's presence? Knight, knave,
prince and fool,
I hate thee and for ever '

And Lancelot said,
'Blessed be thou, Sir Gareth! knight
art thou
To the King's best wish O damsel, be
you wise
To call him shamed, who is but over
thown?
Thrown have I been, nor once, but many
a time
Victor from vanquish'd issues at the last,
And overthrower from being overthrown
With sword we have not striven, and
thy good horse

And thou art weary, yet not less I felt
Thy manhood thro' that wearied lance
of thine
Well hast thou done, for all the storm
is freed,
And thou hast wrek'd his justice on his
foe,
And when reviled, hast answer'd graciously,
And makest merry when overthrown
Prince, Knight,
Hail, Knight and Prince, and of our
Table Round!'

And then when turning to Lynette he
told
The tale of Gueth, pectorally she said,
'Ay well—ay well—for worse than being
fool'd
Of others, is to fool one's self A care,
Sir Lancelot, is hind by, with merits and
dunks
And forge for the horse, and flint for fire
But ill about it flies a honeysuckle
Seek, till we find And when they
sought and found,
Sir Gareth di unk and ate, and all his life
Past into sleep, on whom the maiden
gazed
'Sound sleep be thine! sound cause to
sleep hast thou
Wake lusty! Seem I not so tender to
him
As my mother? Ay, but such a one
As all day long hath rated at her child,
And vext his day, but blesses him isleep—
Good lord, how sweetly smells the
honeysuckle
In the hush'd night, as if the world were
one
Of utter peace, and love, and gentleness!
O Lancelot, Lancelot!—and she clapt
her hands—
'Full merry am I to find my goodly knave
Is knight and noble See now, swoun
havc I,
Else yon black felon had not let me pass,
To bring thee back to do the battle with
him
Thus as thou goest, he will fight thee first,

Who doubts thee victor? so will my knight knave
Miss the full flower of this accomplishment,

Said Lancelot, 'Peradventure he, you name,
May know my shield Let Gareth, as he will,
Change his for mine, and take my charger, flesh,
Not to be spurn'd, loving the battle as well
As he that rides him' 'Lancelot-like,' she said,
'Courteous in this, Lord Lancelot, as in all'

And Gareth, wakening, fiercely clutch'd the shield,
'Rampyelance-splintering lions, on whom all spears
Are rotten sticks! ye seem igne to you!
Yea, ramp and roar at leaving of your lord!—
Cue not, good beasts, so well I cue for you
O noble Lancelot, from my hold on these steams virtue—fire—thio' one that will not shame
Even the shadow of Lancelot under shield
Hence let us go'

Silent the silent field
They traversed Arthur's bryth tho' summer wan,
In counter motion to the clouds, allured
The glance of Gareth dicing on his liege
A star shot 'Lo,' said Gareth, 'the foc falls!'
An owl whoop 'Hark the victor pealing there!'
Suddenly she that rode upon his left
Clung to the shield that Lancelot lent him, crying,
'Yield, yield him this again 'tis he must fight
I curse the tongue that all thio' yesterday reviled thee, and hath wrought on Lancelot now

To lend thee hoise und shield wonders ye have done,
Miracles ye cannot here is glory know
In having flung the three I see thee naim'd,
Mangled I swear thou canst not flung the fourth'

'And wherefoic, damselp tell me all ye know
You cannot scaie me, nor rough face, or voice,
Blute bulk of limb, or boundless savagry
Appal me from the quest'

'Nay, Prince,' she cried,
'God wot, I never look'd upon the face,
Seeing he never rides abroad by day,
But watch'd him have I like a phantom pass
Chilling the night nor have I heard the voice
Always he made his mouthpiece of a page
Who came and went, and still reported him
As closing in himself the strength of ten,
And when his anger tire him, massacring Man, woman, lad and girl—yea, the soft babe!

Some hold that he hath swallow'd infant flesh
Monster! O Prince, I went for Lancelot first,
The quest is Lancelot's give him back the shield'

Said Gareth laughing, 'An he fight for this,
Blike he wins it as the better man
Thus—and not else!'

But Lancelot on him urged
All the devisings of their chivalry
When one might meet a mightier than himself
How best to manage hoise, lance, sword and shield,
And so fill up the gap where force might fail
With skil and fineness Instant were his words

Then Gareth, ‘Here be rules I know
but one—
To dash against mine enemy and to win
Yet have I watch’d thee victor in the
joust,
And seen thy way’ ‘Heaven help thee,’
sigh’d Lynette

Then for a space, and under cloud that
grew
To thunder gloom palling all stars, they
rode
In converse till she made her palfey halt,
Lifted an arm, and softly whisper’d,
‘There’
And all the three were silent seeing,
pitch’d
Beside the Castle Perilous on flat field,
A huge pavilion like a mountain peak
Sunder the glooming crimson on the
marge,
Black, with black banner, and a long
black horn
Beside it hanging, which Sir Gareth
graspt,
And so, before the two could hinder him,
Sent all his heart and breath thio’ all the
horn
Echo’d the walls, a light twinkled, anon
Came lights and lights, and once agan
he blew,
Whereon were hollow tiamplings up and
down
And muffed voices heard, and shadows
past,
Till high above him, circled with hei
maids,
The Lady Lyonois at a window stood,
Beautiful among lights, and waving to him
White hands, and courtesy, but when
the Prince
Three times had blown—after long hush
—at last—
The huge pavilion slowly yielded up,
Thio’ those black foldings, that which
housed them
High on a nightblack hoise, in nightblack
arms,
With white breast-bone, and barren ribs
of Death,

And crown’d with fleshless laughter—
some ten steps—
In the half light—thio’ the dim dawn—
advanced
The monster, and then paused, and spike
no word

But Gareth spoke and all indignantly,
‘Fool, for thou hast, men say, the strength
of ten,
Canst thou not trust the limbs thy God
hath given,
But must, to make the terror of thee more,
Trick thyself out in ghastly imagineries
Of that which Life hath done with, and
the clod,
Less dull than thou, will hide with
mantling flowers
As if for pity? But he spake no word,
Which set the hoiroi higher a muden
swoon’d,
The Lady Lyonois wrung hei hands and
wept,
As doom’d to be the bride of Night and
Death,
Sir Gareth’s head prickled beneath his
helm,
And ev’n Sir Lancelot thio’ his wum
blood felt
Ice strike, and all that mark’d him were
aghast

At once Sir Lancelot’s charger fiercely
neigh’d,
And Death’s dark war horse bounded
forward with him
Then those that did not blink the terror,
saw
That Death was cast to ground, and
slowly rose
But with one stroke Sir Gareth split the
skull
Half fell to right and half to left and lay
Then with a stronger buffet he clove the
helm
As throughly as the skull, and out from
this
Issued the bright face of a blooming boy
Flesh as a flower new born, and crying,
‘Knight,

Slay me not my three brethren bad me
do it,
To make a horror all about the house,
And stay the world from Lady Lyonois
They never dream'd the passes would be
past'
Answer'd Sir Gareth graciously to one
Not many a moon his younger, 'My fair
child,
What madness made thee challenge the
chief knight
Of Arthur's hall?' 'Fair Sir, they bad
me do it
They hate the King, and Lancelot, the
King's friend,
They hoped to slay him somewhere on
the stream,
They never dream'd the passes could be
past'

Then sprang the happier day from
underground,
And Lady Lyonois and her house, with
dance
And revel and song, made merry over
Death,
As being after all then foolish fears
And horois only proven a blooming boy
So large mirth lived and Gareth won the
quest

And he that told the tale in older times
Says that Sir Gareth wedded Lyonois,
But he, that told it late, says Lynette

GERAINT AND ENID

I

THE brave Geraint, a knight of Arthur's
court,
A tributary prince of Devon, one
Of that great Order of the Table Round,
Had married Enid, Yniol's only child,
And loved her, as he loved the light of
Heaven
And as the light of Heaven varies, now
At sunrise, now at sunset, now by night
With moon and trembling stars, so loved
Geraint
To make her beauty vary day by day

In crimson and in purples and in gems
And Enid, but to please her husband's
eye,
Who first had found and loved her in a
state
Of broken fortunes, daily fronted him
In some fresh splendour, and the Queen
herself,
Grateful to Prince Geraint for service
done,
Loved her, and often with her own white
hands
Array'd and deck'd her, as the loveliest,
Next after her own self, in all the court
And Enid loved the Queen, and with true
heart
Adored her, as the stateliest and the best
And loveliest of all women upon earth
And seeing them so tender and so close,
Long in their common love rejoiced
Geraint
But when a rumour rose about the Queen,
Touching her guilty love for Lancelot,
Tho' yet there lived no proof, nor yet
was heard
The world's loud whisper breaking into
storm,
Not less Geraint believed it, and there fell
A horror on him, lest his gentle wife,
Thio' that great tenderness for Guinevere,
Had suffer'd, or should suffer any taint
In nature wherefore going to the King,
He made this pretext, that his princedom
lay
Close on the borders of a territory,
Wherein were bandit earls, and crafty
knights,
Assassins, and all flyers from the hand
Of Justice, and whatever loathes a law
And therefore, till the King himself
should please
To cleanse this common sewer of all his
realm,
He craved a fair permission to depart,
And there defend his marches, and the
King
Mused for a little on his plea, but, last,
Allowing it, the Prince and Enid rode,
And fifty knights rode with them, to the
shores

Of Severn, and they past to then own
land,
Where, thinking, that if ever yet was wife
True to her lord, mine shall be so to me,
He compass'd her with sweet observances
And worship, never leaving her, and grew
Forgetful of his promise to the King,
Forgetful of the falcon and the hunt,
Forgetful of the tilt and tournament,
Forgetful of his glory and his name,
Forgetful of his princedom and its cues
And this forgetfulness was hateful to her
And by and by the people, when they met
In twos and threes, or fuller companies,
Began to scoff and jeer and babble of him
As of a prince whose manhood was all
gone,

And molten down in mere uxoriousness
And this she gather'd from the people's
eyes

This too the women who attuned her herd,
To please her, dwelling on his boundless
love,
Told Enid, and they sadden'd her the
more

And day by day she thought to tell Geraint,
But could not out of bashful delicacy,
While he that watch'd her sadden, was
the more

Suspicious that her nature had a taint

At last, it chanced that on a summer
morn

(They sleeping each by either) the new sun
Beat thro' the blindless casement of the
room,
And heated the strong warrior in his
dreams,
Who, moving, cast the coverlet aside,
And bared the knotted column of his
throat,
The massive square of his heroic breast,
And arms on which the standing muscle
sloped,

As slopes a wild brook o'er a little stone,
Running too vehemently to break upon it
And Enid woke and sat beside the couch,
Admiring him, and thought within herself,
Was ever man so grandly made as he?
Then, like a shadow, past the people's talk

And accusation of uxoriousness
Across her mind, and bowing over him,
Low to her own heart piteously she said

' O noble bierst and all puissant arms,
Am I the curse, I the poor excuse that men
Reproach you, saying all your force is
gone?

I am the curse, because I dare not speak
And tell him what I think and what they
say

And yet I hate that he should linger here,
I cannot love my lord and not his name
For his sake had I given his harness on him,
And ride with him to battle and stand by,
And watch his mighty hand striking
great blows

At caitiffs and at wrongers of the world
For better woe I had in the dark earth,
Not hearing any more his noble voice,
Not to be folded more in these dark arms,
And darken'd from the high light in his
eyes,

Than that my lord thro' me should suffer
shame

Am I so bold, and could I so stand by,
And see my dear lord wounded in the strife,
Or maybe pierced to death before mine
eyes,

And yet not due to tell him what I think,
And how men shun him, saying all his force
Is melted into mere effeminity?
O me, I fear that I am no true wife'

Half inwardly, half audibly she spoke,
And the strong passion in her made her
weep

True tears upon his broad and naked
breast,
And these awoke him, and by great mis
chance

He heard but fragments of her bitter words,
And that she fear'd she was not a true wife
And then he thought, ' In spite of all my
care,

For all my pains, poor man, for all my
pains,

She is not faithful to me, and I see her
Weeping for some gay knight in Arthur's
hall'

Then tho' he loved and reverenced her too much
 To dream she could be guilty of foul act,
 Right tho' his manful breast daunted the pang
 That makes a man, in the sweet face of hei Whom he loves most, lonely and miserable
 At this he hould his huge limbs out of bed,
 And shook his drowsy squire awake and cried,
 'My charger and her palfey,' then to hei, 'I will ride forth into the wilderness,
 For tho' it seems my spurs ue yet to win, I have not fall'n so low as some would wish
 And thou, put on thy worst and meanest dress
 And ride with me.' And Enid ask'd, amazed,
 'If Enid eirs, let Enid leun hei fruit'
 But he, 'I charge thee, ask not, but obey,' Then she bethought her of a faded silk,
 A faded mantle and a faded veil,
 And moving toward a cedurn cabinet, Wherein she kept them folded reverently With springs of summer laid between the folds,
 She took them, and array'd herself therein, Remembering when first he came on hei Drest in that dress, and how he loved hei in it,
 And all hei foolish fears about the dress, And all his journey to hei, is himself Hail told hei, and then coming to the court

For Arthur on the Whitsuntide before Held court at old Caeleon upon Usk There on a day, he sitting high in hall, Before him came a forester of Dean, Wet from the woods, with notice of a huit Taller than all his fellows, mulky-white, First seen that day these things he told the King Then the good King gave order to let blow His horns for hunting on the morrow morn And when the Queen petition'd for his leave To see the hunt, allow'd it easily

So with the morning all the court were gone
 But Guinevere lay late into the morn, Lost in sweet dreams, and dreaming of hei love
 For Lancelot, and forgetful of the hunt, But rose at last, a single maiden with her, Took horse, and forded Usk, and gain'd the wood,
 There, on a little knoll beside it, stay'd Waiting to hear the hounds, but heard instead A sudden sound of hoofs, for Prince Geraint,
 Late also, wearing neither hunting dress Nor weapon, save a golden hilted brand, Came quickly flashing thro' the shallow ford
 Behind them, and so gallop'd up the knoll A purple scarf, at either end whereof There swung an apple of the purest gold, Sway'd round about him, as he gallop'd up To join them, glancing like a dragon fly In summer suit and silks of holiday Low bow'd the tributary Prince, and she, Sweetly and stately, and with all grace Of womanhood and queen'hood, answer'd him
 'Late, late, Sir Prince,' she said, 'later than we'
 'Yet, noble Queen, he answer'd, 'and so late That I but come like you to see the hunt,
 Not join it.' 'Therefore wait with me,' she said, 'For on this little knoll, if anywhere, There is good chance that we shall hem the hounds
 Here often they break covert at our feet' And while they listen'd for the distant hunt,
 And chiefly for the baying of Cwull, King Arthur's hound of deepest mouth, there rode Full slowly by a knight, lady, and dwarf, Whcreof the dwarf lugg'd litest, and the knight Had vizor up, and show'd a youthful face,

Impenous, and of haughtiest lineaments
And Guinevere, not mindful of his face
In the King's hall, desired his name, and
sent

Her maiden to demand it of the dwarf,
Who being vicious, old and irritable,
And doubling all his master's vice of pride,
Made answer sharply that she should not
know

'Then will I ask it of himself,' she said
'Nay, by my faith, thou shalt not,' cried
the dwarf,

'Thou art not worthy ev'n to speak of
him,'
And when she put her horse toward the
knight,

Struck at her with his whip, and she
return'd

Indignant to the Queen, whereat Geraint
Exclaiming, 'Surely I will learn the name,'
Made sharply to the dwarf, and ask'd it
of him,

Who answer'd as before, and when the
Prince

Had put his horse in motion toward the
knight,

Struck at him with his whip, and cut his
cheek.

The Prince's blood spurted upon the scut,
Dyeing it, and his quick, instinctive hand
Caught at the hilt, as to abolish him
But he, from his exceeding manfulness
And pure nobility of temperament,
Wioth to be wroth at such a worm,
refrain'd

From ev'n a word, and so returning said

'I will avenge this insult, noble Queen,
Done in your maiden's person to yourself
And I will track this vermin to their
earths

For tho' I ride unarm'd, I do not doubt
To find, at some place I shall come at,
arms

On loan, or else for pledge, and, being
found,

Then will I fight him, and will break his
pride,

And on the third day will again be here,
So that I be not fall'n in fight Farewell'

'Farewell, fair Prince,' answer'd 'the
stately Queen

'Be prosperous in this journey, as in all,
And may you light on all things that you
love,

And live to wed with her whom first you
love

But ere you wed with any, bring your
bride,

And I, were she the daughter of a
king,

Yea, tho' she were a beggar from the
hedge,

Will clothe her for her bairds like the
sun '

And Prince Geraint, now thinking that
he heard

The noble hart at bay, now the fair hoin,
A little vext at losing of the hunt,
A little at the vile occasion, rode,
By ups and downs, thro' many a gressy
glade

And valley, with fixt eye following the
three

At last they issued from the world of
wood,

And climb'd upon a fur and even ridge,
And show'd themselves aginst the sky,
and sink

And thither came Geraint, and under
neath

Beheld the long street of a little town
In a long valley, on one side whereof,
White from the mason's hand, a fortress
rose ,

And on one side a castle in decay,
Beyond a bridge that spann'd a dry
rivine

And out of town and valley came a noise
As of a broad brook o'er a shingly bed
Brawling, or like a clourer of the rooks
At distance, ere they settle for the night

And onward to the fortress rode the
three,

And enter'd, and were lost behind the
walls

'So,' thought Geraint, 'I have track'd
him to his earth'

And down the long street riding wearily,
Found every hostel full, and everywhere
Was hammer laid to hoof, and the hot
hiss
And bustling whistle of the youth who
scou'd
His master's armour, and of such a one
He ask'd, 'What means the tumult in
the town?'
Who told him, scouring still, 'The
sparow-hawk.'
Then riding close behind an ancient chuir,
Who, smitten by the dusty sloping beam,
Went sweating underneath a sack of corn,
Ask'd yet once more what meant the
hubhub here?
Who answer'd gruffly, 'Ugh! the sparow
hawk'
Then riding further past an armourer's,
Who, with back turn'd, and bow'd above
his wark,
Sat riveting a helmet on his knee,
He put the self same query, but the man
Not turning round, nor looking at him,
said
'Friend, he that labours for the sparow-
hawk
Has little time for idle questioners'
Whereat Geraint flash'd into sudden
spleen
'A thousand pips eat up your sparow
hawk'
Tits, wiens, and all wing'd nothings peck
him dead'
Ye think the rustic cackle of your boug
The murmur of the world! What is it
to me?
O wretched set of sparrows, one and all,
Who pipe of nothing but of sparow-
hawks'
Speak, if ye be not like the rest, hawk-
mad,
Where can I get me harbouage for the
night?
And arms, arms, arms to fight my enemy?
Speak!'
Whereat the armourer turning all amazed
And seeing one so gay in purple silks,
Came forward with the helmet yet in
hand

And answer'd, 'Pardon me, O stranger
knight,
We hold a tourney here to morrow morn,
And there is scanty time for half the work
Arms? truth! I know not all are
wanted here
Harbouage? truth, good truth, I know
not, save,
It may be, at Earl Yniol's, o'er the bridge
Yonder' He spoke and fell to work
again
Then rode Geraint, a littlespleenful yet,
Across the bridge that spann'd the dry
ravine
There musing sat the hoary headed Earl,
(His dress a suit of fay'd magnificence,
Once fit for feasts of ceremony) and
sud
'Whither, fair son?' to whom Geraint
replied,
'O friend, I seek a harbouage for the
night'
Then Yniol, 'Enter therefore and partake
The slender entertainment of a house
Once rich, now poor, but ever open-
door'd'
'Thanks, venerable friend,' replied
Geraint,
'So that ye do not serve me sparow
hawks
For supper, I will enter, I will eat
With all the passion of a twelve hours'
fast'
Then sigh'd and smiled the hoary-headed
Earl,
And answer'd, 'Giavel cause than yours
is mine
To curse this hedgerow thief, the sparow-
hawk
But in, go in, for save youself desire it,
We will not touch upon him ev'n in jest'
Then rode Geraint into the castle court,
His chaiger trampling many a prickly
star
Of sprouted thistle on the broken stones.
He look'd and saw that all was ruinous
Here stood a shatter'd archway plumed
with fein,

And here had fall'n a great put of a tower,
Whole, like a crag that tumbles from the cliff,
And like a crag was gray with wilding flowers

And high above a piece of turreted stair,
Worn by the feet that now were silent, wound

Baie to the sun, and monstrous ivy stems
Claspt the gray walls with hairy fibred arms,

And suck'd the joining of the stones, and look'd
A knot, beneath, of snakes, aloft, a grove

And while he waited in the castle court,
The voice of Enid, Yniol's daughter, rang
Clear thro' the open casement of the hall,
Singing, and as the sweet voice of a bird,
Heard by the lander in a lonely isle,
Moves him to think what kind of bird it is
That sings so delicately clear, and make
Conjecture of the plumage and the form,
So the sweet voice of Enid moved Geraint,
And made him like a man abroad at morn
When first the liquid note beloved of men
Comes flying over many a windy wave
To Britain, and in April suddenly
Breaks from a coppice gemm'd with green
and red,

And he suspends his converse with a friend,

Or it may be the labour of his hands,
To think or say, 'There is the nightingale,'
So fared it with Geraint, who thought
and said,

'Here, by God's grace, is the one voice
for me'

It chanced the song that Enid sang
was one
Of Fortune and her wheel, and Enid
sang

'Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel and lower the proud,
Turn thy wild wheel thro' sunshine, storm, and cloud,
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate'

'Turn, Fortune, turn thy wheel with
smile or frown,
With that wild wheel we go not up or down,
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great

'Smile and we smile, the lords of many lands,
Frown and we smile, the lords of our own hands,
For man is man and master of his fate

'Turn, turn thy wheel above the stuning crowd,
Thy wheel and thou the shadows in the cloud,
Thy wheel and thee we neither love nor hate'

'Hark, by the bird's song ye may learn
the nest,'
Said Yniol, 'enter quickly.' Entering
then,

Right o'er a mount of newly fallen stones,
The dusky rafter'd many cobweb'd hall,
He found an ancient dame in dim broiderey,
And near her, like a blossom vermeil white,

That lightly breaks a faded flower sheath,
Moved the fair Enid, all in faded silk,
Her daughter. In a moment thought
Geraint,

'Here by God's good is the one maid for
me.'

But none spake word except the hony Earl

'Enid, the good knight's horse stands in
the court,

Take him to stall, and give him corn, and then

Go to the town and buy us flesh and wine,

And we will make us merry as we may
Our hoard is little, but our hearts are great'

He spake the Prince, as Enid past
him, fair
To follow, strode a stride, but Yniol caught

His purple scarf, and held, and said,
'Forbear !'
Rest ! the good house, tho' run'd, O my
son,
Endures not that her guest should serve
himself ?
And reverencing the custom of the house
Geraint, from utter courtesy, forbore

So Enid took his charger to the stall,
And after went her way across the bridge,
And reach'd the town, and while the

Prince and Earl

Yet spoke together, came again with one,
A youth, that following with a costiel bole
The means of godly welcome, flesh and
wine

And Enid brought sweet cakes to make
them cheer,
And in her veil ensolded, manchet bield
And then, because then hall must also
serve

For kitchen, boil'd the flesh, and spread
the board,
And stood behind, and waited on the
three

And seeing her so sweet and serviceable,
Geraint had longing in him evermore
To stoop and kiss the tender little thumb,
I hat clost the tiencher as she laid it
down

But after all had eaten, then Geraint,
For now the wine made summer in his
veins,

Ict his eye iove in following, or rest
On Enid at hei lowly handmaid work,
Now here, now there, about the dusky
hall,

Then suddenly address the hoary Earl

'Fair Host and Earl, I pray your
courtesy,

This spurow-hawk, what is he ? tell me
of him

His name ? but no, good faith, I will not
have it

For if he be the knight whom late I saw
Ride into that new fortress by your town,
White from the mason's hand, then have

I sworn

From his own lips to have it—I am
Geraint
Of Devon—for this morning when the
Queen
Sent hei own maiden to demand the name,
His dwarf, a vicious under-shapen thing,
Struck at hei with his whip, and she re-
turn'd

Indignant to the Queen, and then I swore
That I would track this caitiff to his hold,
And fight and break his pride, and have
it of him

And all unarm'd I rode, and thought to
find

Arms in your town, where all the men
are mad,

They take the rustic murmur of their
bourg

For the great wave that echoes round the
world,

They would not hear me speek but if
ye know

Where I can light on arms, or if yourself
Should have them, tell me, seeing I have
sworn

That I will break his pride and lean his
name,

Avenging this great insult done the
Queen'

Then quued Eul Ynol, 'Art thou he
indeed,

Geraint, a name ful sounded among men
For noble deeds ? and truly I, when first
I saw you moving by me on the bridge,
Felt ye were somewhat, yea, and by your
state

And presense might have guess'd you one
of those

That ent in Aithur's hall at Camelot
Nor speak I now from foolish flattery,
For this deu child hath often heard me
prize

You fests of arms, and often when I
paused

Hath ask'd agun, and ever loved to heu,
So grutful is the noise of noble deeds
To noble hearts who see but acts of wronng
O never yet hid woman such a pair
Of suitors as this maiden, first Limours,

A creature wholly given to brawls and wine,
Drunk even when he wo'd , and be he dead
I know not, but he past to the wild land
The second was your foe, the sparrow hawk,
My curse, my nephew—I will not let his name
Slip from my lips if I can help it—he,
When I that knew him fierce and turbulent
Refused her to him, then his pride awoke ,
And since the proud man often is the mean,
He sow'd a slander in the common e'er,
Affirming that his father left him gold,
And in my charge, which was not render'd to him ,
Bribed with laige promises the men who serv'd
About my person, the more easily
Because my means were somewhat broken into
Thro' open doo's and hospitality ,
Raised my own town against me in the night
Before my Enid's birthday, sack'd my house ,
From mine own earldom foully ousted me ,
Built that new fort to overawe my friends,
For truly there are those who love me yet ,
And keeps me in this iunous castle here ,
Where doubtless he would put me soon to death ,
But that his pride too much despises me
And I myself sometimes despise myself ,
For I have let men be, and have their way ,
Am much too gentle, have not used my power
Nor know I whether I be very base
Or very manful, whether very wise
Or very foolish , only this I know ,
That whatsoever evil happen to me ,
I seem to suffer nothing heart or limb ,
But can endure it all most patiently '

'Well said, true heart,' replied Geraint,
‘but aims,
That if the sparrow hawk, this nephew ,
fight
In next day's tourney I may break his pride ’
And Yniol answer'd, ‘Arms, indeed ,
but old
And iusty, old and iusty, Prince Geraint ,
Aie mine, and therefore at thine asking ,
thine
But in this tournament can no man tilt ,
Except the lady he loves best be there
Two forks are fitt into the meadow ground ,
And over these is placed a silver wond ,
And over that a golden sparrow hawk ,
The prize of beauty for the furest there
And this, what knight soever be in field
Lays claim to for the lady at his side ,
And tilts with my good nephew there upon ,
Who being ipt at arms and big of bone
Has ever won it for the lady with him ,
And toppling over all antagonism
Has earn'd himself the name of sparrow hawk
But thou, that hast no lady, canst not fight ’
To whom Geraint with eyes all bright replied ,
I turning a little toward him, ‘Thy leave !
Let me lay lance in rest, O noble host ,
For this dear child, because I never saw ,
Tho' having seen all beauties of our time ,
Nor can see elsewhere, anything so fair
And if I fall her name will yet remain .
Untarnish'd as before , but if I live ,
So aid me Heaven when at mine uttermost ,
As I will make her truly my true wife ’
Then, howsoever patient, Yniol's heut
Danced in his bosom, seeing better days
And looking round he saw not Enid there ,
(Who hearing her own name had stol'n away)
But that old dame, to whom full tenderly
And fondling all her hand in his he said ,

'Mother, a maiden is a tender thing,
And best by her that bore her understood
Go thou to rest, but eie thou go to rest
Tell her, and piove her heart toward the
Prince'

So spake the kindly-hearted Eail, and she
With frequent smile and nod departing found,
Half disarray'd as to her rest, the girl ,
Whom first she kiss'd on either cheek,
and then
On either shining shoulder laid a hand,
And kept her off and gazed upon her face,
And told her all their converse in the hall,
Proving her heart but never light and shade
Coursed one another more on open ground
Beneath a troubled heaven, than red and pale
Across the face of Enid hearing her ,
While slowly falling as a scale that falls,
When weight is added only grain by grain,
Sank hei sweet head upon her gentle breast ,
Nor did she lift an eye noi speak a word,
Rapt in the feai and in the wonder of it ,
So moving without answei to hei rest
She found no rest, and ever fail'd to draw
The quiet night into her blood, but lay
Contemplating hei own unworthisness ,
And when the pale and bloodless east began
To quicken to the sun, arose, and rised
Hei mother too, and hand in hand they moved
Down to the meadow where the jousts
weie held,
And waited there for Yniol and Gerant

And thither came the twain, and when
Gerant
Beheld hei first in field, awaiting him ,
He felt, were she the prize of bodily force,
Himself beyond the rest pushing could move
The chair of Idris Yniol's rusted arms
Were on his princely person, but thro' these

Princelike his bearing shone , and errant knights
And ladies came, and by and by the town
Flow'd in, and settling circled all the lists
And there they fixt the forks into the ground,
And over these they placed the silver wand,
And over that the golden sparrow-hawk
Then Yniol's nephew, after trumpet blown,
Spake to the lady with him and pio-claim'd,
'Advance and take as fairest of the fan,
For I these two years past have won it
for thee,
The prize of beauty ' Loudly spake the Prince,
'Forbear there is a worthier,' and the knight
With some suprise and thrice as much disdain
Turn'd, and beheld the four, and all his face
Glow'd like the heart of a great fire at Yule,
So burnt he was with passion, crying out,
'Do battle for it then,' no more , and thrice
They clash'd together, and thrice they
broke their spears
Then each, dishorsed and drawing, lash'd
at each
So often and with such blows, that all the crowd
Wonder'd, and now and then from distant walls
There came a clapping as of phantom hands
So twice they fought, and twice they
breathed, and still
The dew of their great labour, and the blood
Of their strong bodies, flowing, diam'd
their force
But either's force was match'd till Yniol's cry,
'Remember that great insult done the Queen,'
Increased Gerant's, who heived his blade aloft,

And crack'd the helmet thro', and bit the bone,
And fell'd him, and set foot upon his breast,
And said, 'Thy name?' To whom the fallen man
Made answer, groaning, 'Edyin, son of Nudd'

Ashamed am I that I should tell it thee
My pride is broken men have seen my fall'

'Then, Edyin, son of Nudd,' replied Geraint,

'These two things shalt thou do, or else thou diest

First, thou thyself, with damsel and with dwarf,

Shalt ride to Arthur's court, and coming there,

Cleave pardon for that insult done the Queen,

And shalt abide her judgment on it, next,
Thou shalt give back their earldom to thy kin

These two things shalt thou do, or thou shalt die'

And Edyin answer'd, 'These things will I do,

For I have never yet been overthrown,
And thou hast overthrown me, and my pride

Is broken down, for Enid sees my fall'

And rising up, he rode to Arthur's court,
And there the Queen forgave him easily
And being young, he changed and came to loathe

His name of traitor, slowly drew himself
Bright from his old dark life, and fell at last

In the great battle fighting for the King

But when the third day from the hunting-morn

Made a low splendour in the world, and wings

Moved in her ivy, Enid, for she lay
With her fair head in the dim yellow light,
Among the dancing shadows of the birds,
Woke and bethought her of her promise given

No later than last eve to Prince Geraint—
So bent he seem'd on going the third day,
He would not leave her, till her promise given—

To ride with him this morning to the court,
And there be made known to the stately Queen,

And there be wedded with all ceremony
At this she cast her eyes upon her dress,
And thought it never yet had look'd so

mcn
For as a leaf in mid November is
To what it was in mid October, seem'd
The dress that now she look'd on to the

dress
She look'd on eie the coming of Geraint
And still she look'd, and still the tei.oi

giew
Of that strange bright and dairdful thing,
a court,

All shining at her in her faded silk
And softly to her own sweet heart she said

'This noble prince who won our
caelom hiel ,

So splendid in his acts and his attire,
Sweet heaven, how much I shall discredit him !

Would he could tarry with us here awhile,
But being so bholden to the Prince,
It were but little grace in any of us,
Bent as he seem'd on going this third day,
To seek a second favour at his hands
Yet if he could but tarry a day or two,
Myself would work eyc dim, and finger lame,

Far liefer than so much discredit him ' ~

And Enid fell in longing for a dress
All branch'd and flower'd with gold, a costly gift

Of her good mother, given her on the night

Before her birthday, thrice sid years ago,
That night of fire, when Edyin sack'd their house,

And scatter'd all they had to all the winds
For while the mother show'd it, and the

Were turning and admiring it, the work
To both appear'd so costly, rose a cry
That Edyrn's men were on them, and they
fled.

With little save the jewels they had on,
Which being sold and sold had bought
them bread

And Edyrn's men had caught them in
their flight,
And placed them in this ruin, and she
wish'd

The Prince had found her in her ancient
home,

Then let her fancy fit across the past,
And roam the goodly places that she
knew,

And last bethought her how she used to
watch,

Near that old home, a pool of golden carp,
And one was patch'd and blur'd and
lustieless

Among his burnish'd brethren of the pool,
And half asleep she made comparison
Of that and those to her own faded self
And the gay court, and fell asleep again,
And dreamt herself was such a faded form
Among her burnish'd sisters of the pool,
But this was in the garden of a king,
And tho' she lay dark in the pool, she
knew

That all was bright, that all about were
birds

Of sunny plumc in gilded triclis work,
That all the tuft was rich in plots that
look'd

Each like a guinet or a tunkis in it,
And lords and ladies of the high court
wcnt

In silver tissue talking things of state,
Ard children of the King in cloth of
gold

Glanced at the doors or gumbol'd down
the wilks,

And while she thought 'They will not
see me,' came

A stately queen whose name was
Guinevere,

And all the children in their cloth of gold
Ran to her, crying, 'If we have fish at
all

Let them be gold, and charge the
gardeners now
To pick the faded creature from the pool,
And cast it on the mixen that it die,
And therewithal one came and seized on
her,

And Enid started wiking, with her heart
All oveshadow'd by 'he foolish dream,
And lo ! it was her mother grasping her
To get her well awake, and in her hand
A suit of bright apparel, which she laid
Flat on the couch, and spoke exultingly

'See here, my child, how fresh the
colours look,
How fast they hold like colours of a shell
That keeps the wear and polish of the
wave

Why not? It never yet was worn, I trow
Look on it, child, and tell me if ye know
it'

And Enid look'd, but all confused at
first,
Could scarce divide it from her foolish
dream

Then suddenly she knew it and rejoiced,
And answ'rd, 'Yea, I know it, your
good gift,
So sadly lost on that unhappy night,
Your own good gift!' 'Yea, surely,' said
the dame,

'And gladly given agan this happy morn
For when the jousts were ended yesterday,
Went Yniol thro' the town, and every
where

He found the sick and plundered of our
house

All scatter'd thro' the houses of the town,
And gave command that all which once

w's ours
Should now be ours agan and yester eve,
While ye were talking sweetly with your
Prince,

Came one with this and laid it in my hand,
For love or fear, or seeing favour of us,
Because we have our carldom back again
And yester eve I would not tell you of it,
But kept it for a sweet surprise at morn
Yea, truly is it not a sweet surprise?

For I myself unwillingly have worn
My faded suit, as you, my child, have
yours,

And howsoever patient, Yniol his
Ah, dear, he took me from a goodly house,
With store of rich apparel, sumptuous fare,
And page, and maid, and squire, and
seneschal,

And pastime both of hawk and hound,
and all

That appertains to noble maintenance
Yea, and he brought me to a goodly house,
But since our fortune swerved from sun to
shade,

And all thro' that young traitor, cruel need
Constrain'd us, but a better time has
come,

So clothe yourself in this, that better fits
Our mended fortunes and a Prince's bride
For tho' ye won the prize of fairest fair,
And tho' I heard him call you fairest fair,
Let never maiden think, however fair,
She is not fairer in new clothes than old
And should some great court-lady say, the

Prince

Hath pick'd a ragged-robin from the
hedge,
And like a madman brought her to the
court,
Then were ye shamed, and, worse, might
shame the Prince

To whom we are beholden, but I know,
When my dear child is set forth at her best,
That neither court nor country, tho' they
sought

Thro' all the provinces like those of old
That lighted on Queen Esther, has her
match'

Here ceased the kindly mother out of
breath,

And Enid listen'd brightening as she lay,
Then, as the white and glittering star of
moan

Parts from a bank of snow, and by and by
Slips into golden cloud, the maiden rose,
And left her maiden couch, and robed
herself,

Help'd by the mother's careful hand and
eye,

Without a mirror, in the gorgeous gown,
Who, after, turn'd hei daughter round,
and said,

She never yet had seen hei half so fair,
And call'd hei like that maiden in the tale,
Whom Gwydion made by glamour out of
flowers,

And sweeter than the bride of Cassivelau,
Flu, for whose love the Roman Cæsar
fist

Invaded Britain, 'But we beat him back,
As this great Prince invaded us, and we,
Not beat him back, but welcomed him
with joy

And I can scarcely ride with you to court,
For old am I, and rough the ways and
wild,

But Yniol goes, and I full oft shall dream
I see my princess as I see her now,
Clothed with my gift, and gay among the
gray'

But while the women thus rejoiced,
Geraint

Woke where he slept in the high hall, and
call'd

For Enid, and when Yniol made report
Of that good mother making Enid gay
In such apparel as might well beseem
His princess, or indeed the stately Queen,
He answer'd 'Evil, entreat hei by my
love,

Albeit I give no reason but my wish,
That she ride with me in her faded silk,
Yniol with that hard message went, it fell
Like flaws in summer lying lusty corn
For Enid, all abash'd she knew not why,
Dared not to glance at her good mother's
face,

But silently, in all obedience,
Her mother silent too, nor helping hei,
Laid from her limbs the costly broider'd
gift,

And robed them in her ancient suit again,
And so descended Never man rejoiced
More than Geraint to greet hei thus
attired,

And glancing all at once as keenly at hei
As careful robins eye the delver's toil,
Made hei cheek burn and either eyelid fall,

But rested with her sweet face satisfied ,
Then seeing cloud upon the mother's brow ,
Her by both hands he caught , and sweetly
said,

O my new mother , be not wroth or
grieved

At thy new son , for my petition to her
When late I left Caerleon , our great
Queen ,
In words whose echo lasts , they were so
sweet ,
Made promise , that whatever bide I
brought ,
Herself would clothe her like the sun in
Heaven

Thereafter , when I reach'd this iun'd hall ,
Beholding one so bright in dark estate ,
I vow'd that could I gun her , our fair
Queen ,

No hand but hers , should make your Enid
burst

Sunlike from cloud—and likewise thought
perhaps ,

That service done so graciously would
bind

The two together , fain I would the two
Should love each other how can Enid
find

A nobler friend ? Another thought was
mine ,

I came among you here so suddenly ,
That tho' her gentle presence at the lists
Might well have served for proof that I
was loved ,

I doubted whether daughter's tenderness ,
Or easy nature , might not let itself

* Be moulded by your wishes for her weal ,
Or whether some false sense in her own
self

Of my contrasting brightness , overboore
Her fancy dwelling in this dusky hill ,
And such a sense might make her long
for court

And all its perilous glories and I
thought ,

That could I somehow prove such force
in her

Lincl'd with such love for me , that it a
word

(No reason given her) she could cast aside
A splendour dear to women , new to her ,
And therefore dearer , or if not so new ,
Yet therefore tenfold dearer by the power
Of intermitted usage , then I felt

That I could rest , a rock in ebbs and
flows ,

Fixt on her faith Now , therefore , I do
rest ,

A prophet certain of my prophecy ,
That never shadow of mistrust can cross
Between us Grant me pardon for my
thoughts

And for my strange petition I will make
Amends hereafter by some grudy day ,
When you fair child shall wear your
costly gift

Beside your own warm heath , with , on
her knees ,

Who knows ? another gift of the high
God ,
Which , maybe , shall have learn'd to lisp
you thanks '

He spoke the mother smiled , but half
in tears ,

Then brought a mantle down and wrapt
her in it ,

And claspt and kiss'd her , and they rode
away

Now thuce that morning Guinevere had
climb'd

The giant tower , from whose high crest ,
they say ,

Men saw the goodly hills of Somerset ,
And white sails flying on the yellow sea ,
But not to goodly hill or yellow sea
Look'd the fair Queen , but up the vale
of Usk ,

By the flat meadow , till she saw them
come ,

And then descending met them at the
gates ,

Embraced her with all welcome as a
fiend ,

And did hei honour as the Prince's bride ,
And clothed hei for hei bridals like the
sun ,

And all that week was old Caerleon gay ,

For by the hands of Dubric, the high saint,
They twain were wedded with all ceremony

And this was on the last year's Whitsuntide

But Enid even kept the faded silk,
Remembering how first he came on her,
Drest in that dress, and how he loved her in it,

And all her foolish fears about the dress,
And all his journey toward her, as himself

Had told her, and then coming to the court

And now this morning when he said to her,
'Put on your whitest and meanest dress,' she found
And took it, and array'd herself therin

II

O purblind race of miserable men,
How many among us at this very hour
Do forge a life long trouble for ourselves,
By taking true for false, or false for true,
Here, thro' the feeble twilight of this world
Groping, how many, until we pass and reach

That other, where we see as we are seen!

So fared it with Geraint, who issuing forth

That morning, when they both had got to hoise,

Perhaps because he loved her passionately,
And felt that tempest brooding round his heart,

Which, if he spoke at all would break his voice

Upon a head so dear in thunder, said
'Not at my side I charge thee ride before,

Ever a good way on before, and thus
I charge thee, on thy duty as a wife,
Whatever happens, not to speak to me,
No, not a word!' and Enid was aghast,
And forth they rode, but scarce three paces on,

When crying out, 'Esteeminate as I am,
I will not fight my way with gilded arms,
All shall be non,' he loosed a mighty purse,

Hung at his belt, and haul'd it toward the squire

So the last sight that Enid had of home
Was all the marble threshold flashing, strown

With gold and scatter'd coinage, and the squire

Chafing his shoulder then he cried again,
'To the wilds!' and Enid leading down the tracks

Thro' which he bad her lead him on, they past

The marches, and by bandit haunted holds,

Gray swamps and pools, waste places of the hem,

And wildernesses, perilous paths, they rode

Round wth then pace at first, but slackened soon

A stranger meeting them had surely thought

They rode so slowly and they look'd so pale,

That each had suffer'd some exceeding wrong

Fo^r he wth ever saying to himself,
'O I that wasted time to tend upon her,
To compass her with sweet observances,
To drest her beautifully and keep her true'—

And there he broke the sentence in his heat

Abruptly, is a man upon his tongue
May break it, when his passion masters him

And she was ever praying the sweet heavens

To save her dear lord whole from any wound

And ever in her mind she cast about
Fo^r that unnoticed failing in herself,
Which made him look so cloudy and so cold,

Till the great lover's human whistle amazed

Her heart, and glancing round the waste
she feard
In every wavering brake an ambuscade
Then thought again, 'If there be such in
me,

I might amend it by the grace of Heaven,
If he would only speak and tell me of it'

But when the fourth part of the day
was gone,

Then Enid was aware of three tall knights
On horseback, wholly arm'd, behind a
rock

In shadow, waiting for them, caitiffs all,
And heard one crying to his fellow,

'Look,

Here comes a laggard hanging down his
head,

Who seems no bolder than a beaten
hound,

Come, we will slay him and will have his
horse

And armou, and his damsel shall be
ours'

Then Enid ponder'd in her heart, and
said

'I will go back a little to my lord,
And I will tell him all then caitiff talk,
For, be he wroth even to slaying me,
Far liefer by his drou hand had I die,
Than that my lord should suffer loss or
shame'

Then she went back some paces of
return,

Met his full frown timidly firm, and said,
'My lord, I saw three bandits by the
rock

Waiting to fall on you, and heard them
boast

That they would slay you, and possess
your horse

And armour, and your damsel should be
theirs'

He made a wirthful answer 'Did I
wish
Your warning or your silence? one com-
mand
I had upon you, not to speak to me,

And thus ye keep it! Well then, look
—for now,

Whether ye wish me victory or defeat,
Long for my life, or hunger for my death,
Yourself shall see my vigour is not lost'

Then Enid waited pale and sorrowful,
And down upon him bare the bandit
three

And at the midmost charging, Prince
Geraint

Drive the long spear a cubit thro' his
breast

And out beyond, and then against his
brace

Of comrades, each of whom had broken
on him

A lance that splinter'd like an icicle,
Swung from his bland a windy buffet out
Once, twice, to right, to left, and stunn'd
the twain

Or slew them, and dismounting like a man
That skins the wild beast after slaying
him,

Scipt from the three dead wolves of
woman born

The three gay suits of armou which they
wore,

And let the bodies lie, but bound the suits
Of armou on then horses, each on each,
And tied the bidle rims of all the three
Together, and sud to her, 'Drive them
on

Before you,' and she drove them thro'
the waste

He follow'd never ruth begin to
work

Against his anger in him, while he watch'd
The being he loved best in all the world,
With difficulty in mild obedience
Driving them on he fan hid spoken to
her,

And loosed in words of sudden fire the
width

And smoulder'd wrong that burnt him all
within,

But evinmore it seem'd an easier thing
At once without remorse to strike her
dead,

Than to cly 'Halt,' and to hei own
bright face
Accuse her of the least immodesty
And thus tongue-tied, it made him wroth
the more
That she could speak whom his own ear
had heard
Call herself false and suffering thus he
made
Minutes an age but in scaice longer time
Than at Caerleon the full tided Usk,
Before he tuin to fall seaward agun,
Pauses, did Enid, keeping watch, behold
In the first shallow shade of a deep wood,
Before a gloom of stubborn shafted oaks,
Three other hoisemen waiting, wholly
arm'd,
Whereof one seem'd fai larger than hei
laid,
And shook her pulses, crying, 'Look, a
prize'
Three horses and three goodly suuts of
arms,
And all in charge of whom? a gulf set on?
'Nay,' said the second, 'yonder comes a
knight'
The third, 'A craven, how he hangs his
head'
The giant answer'd merrily, 'Yea, but one?
Wait here, and when he passes fall upon
him'

And Enid ponder'd in hei heut and
said,
'I will abide the coming of my lord,
And I will tell him all their villainy
My lord is weary with the fight before,
And they will fall upon him unware
I needs must disobey him for his good,
How should I dare obey him to his haim?
Needs must I speak, and tho' he kill me
for it,
I save a life deaier to me than mine'

And she abode his coming, and sud to
him
With timid firmness, 'Have I leave to
speak?'
He said, 'Ye take it, speaking,' and she
spoke

'There lurk thiee villains yonder in the
wood,
And each of them is wholly arm'd, and one
Is larger limb'd than you ue, and they sy
That they will fall upon you while ye
pass'

To which he flung a wrathful answer
back

'And if there were an hundred in the
wood,
And every man were laiger limb'd than I,
And all at once should sally out upon me,
I swear it would not ruffle me so much
As you that not obey me Stand aside,
And if I fall, cleave to the better man'

And Enid stood aside to wait the event,
Not dare to watch the combit, only
breathe

Shoit fits of prayer, at every stroke a
breath
And he, she dienderd most, bue down
upon him
Aim'd at the helm, his lance err'd, but
Geraint's,
A little in the late encounter stain'd,
Struck thro' the bulky bandit's corslet
home,

And then brake shoit, and down his
enemy roll'd,
And there ly still, as he that tells the
tale

Saw once a great piece of a promontory,
That had a sapling growing on it, slide
From the long shore cliff's windy walls
to the beach,
And theric he still, and yet the sapling
grew

So lay the man transfixt His craven pur
Of comadias making slowlier at the
Prince,

When now they saw their bulwark fallen,
stood,
On whom the victor, to confound them
more,
Spur'd with his terrible war cry, for as
one,
That listens near a torent mountain
brook,

All thro' the crash of the neai cataract hears
The diumming thunder of the huge fall
At distance, were the soldiers wont to
hear

His voice in battle, and be kindled by it,
And foemen scared, like that false pair
who turn'd

Flying, but, overtaken, died the death
Themselves had wrought on many an
innocent

Thereon Geraint, dismounting, pick'd
the lance
That pleased him best, and diew from
those dead wolves
Then three gay suits of armour, each from
each,
And bound them on then horses, each on
each,
And tied the bidle-reins of all the three
Together, and said to her, 'Drive them on
Before you,' and she drove them thro' the
wood

He follow'd nearer still the pain she
had
To keep them in the wild wrys of the
wood,
Two sets of three laden with jingling
aims,
Together, served a little to disedge
The sharpness of that pain about her
heart
And they themselves, like creatures gently
born
But into bad hands fall'n, and now so long
By bandits groom'd, prick'd their light
ears, and felt
Her low firm voice and tender government

So thro' the green gloom of the wood
they pas,
And issuing under open heavens beheld
A little town with towers, upon a rock,
And close beneath, a meadow gemlike
chased
In the brown wild, and mowers mowing
in it

And down a rooky pathway from the place
There came a fair hul'd youth, that in
his hand

Bare victual for the mowers and Geraint
Had ruth again on Enid looking pale
Then, moving downward to the meadow
ground,

He, when the fair hair'd youth came by
him, said,

'Friend, let her eat, the damsel is so
faint'

'Yea, willingly,' replied the youth, 'and
thou,

My lord, eat also, tho' the fare is coarse,
And only meet for mowes,' then set
down

His basket, and dismounting on the swaid
They let the horses glaze, and ate them
selves

And Enid took a little delicately,
Less having stomach for it than desire
To close with hei lord's pleasure, but
Geraint

Ate all the mowers' victual unware,
And when he found all empty, was
amazed,

And 'Boy,' said he, 'I have eaten all,
but take
A horse and aims for guerdon, choose
the best'

He, reddening in extremity of delight,
'My lord, you overpay me fifty-fold'
'Ye will be all the wealthier,' cried the
Prince

'I take it as free gift, then,' said the boy,
'Not guerdon, for myself can easily,
While you good damsel rests, return,
and fetch
Fresh victual for these mowers of our
Eail,

For these are his, and all the field is his,
And I myself am his, and I will tell
him

How great a man thou art he loves to
know

When men of mark are in his territory
And he will have thee to his palace here,
And serve thee costlier than with mowes'
fate'

Then said Geraint, 'I wish no better
fare
I never ate with angrier appetite

Than when I left your mowers dinneless
And into no Eail's palace will I go
I know, God knows, too much of
palaces'

And if he want me, let him come to me
But hie us some fur chamber for the
night,
And stalling for the horses, and return
With victual for these men, and let us
know'

'Yea, my kind lord,' said the glad
youth, and went,
Held his head high, and thought himself
a knight,
And up the rocky pathway disappear'd,
Leading the hoise, and they were left
alone

But when the Prince had brought his
eriant eyes
Home from the rock, sideways he let
them glance
At Enid, where she droopt his own
false doom,
That shadow of mistrust should never cross
Betwixt them, came upon him, and he
sigh'd,
Then with another humorous ruth re
mark'd
The lusty mowers labouring dinneless,
And watch'd the sun blaze on the turning
scythe,
And after nodded sleepily in the heat
But she, rememb'ring her old ruin'd hall,
And all the windy clamour of the daws
About hei hollow turret, pluck'd the
grass

There growing longest by the meadow's
edge,
And into many a listless annulet,
Now over, now beneath hei marriage
ring,
Wove and unwove it, till the boy return'd
And told them of a chamber, and they
went,
Where, after saying to hei, 'If ye will,
Call for the woman of the house,' to which
She answer'd, 'Thunks, my lord,' the
two remain'd

Apart by all the chamber's width, and
mute
As creatures voiceless thro' the fault of
buth,

Or two wild men supporters of a shield,
Painted, who stade at open space, no
glance
The one at other, paide by the shield

On a sudden, many a voice along the
street,
And hecl against the pavement echoing,
burst
Then diowse, and either started while
the door,
Push'd from without, diave backward to
the wall,
And midmost of a rout of roisterers,
Femininely fair and dissolutely pale,
Her suitor in old years before Geraint,
Enter'd, the wild lord of the place,
Limours

He moving up with pliant courtliness,
Gicetcd Geraint full face, but stealthily,
In the mid wumth of welcome and grapspt
hand,
Found Enid with the corner of his ey,
And knew her sitting sad and solituy
Then cried Geraint for wine and goodly
cheer
To feed the sudden guest, and sump
tuously
According to his fashion, bad the host
Call in what men sover were his friends,
And feast with these in honour of then
Eul,
'And eue not for the cost, the cost is
mine'

And wine and food were brought, and
Earl Limours
Drank till he jested with all ease, and told
Free tales, and took the word and play'd
upon it,
And made it of two coloures, for his talk,
When wine and free companions kindled
him,
Was wont to glance and sparkle like a gem
Of fifty facets, thus he moved the Prince
To laughte and his comadias to applause

Then, when the Prince was meiry, ask'd
Limous,
'Your leave, my lord, to cross the room,
and speak.
To you good d'msel there who sits apart,
And seems so lonely?' 'My free leave,'
he said,
'Get her to speak—she doth not speak to
me.'
Then rose Limous, and looking at his
feet,
Like him who tries the budge he fears
may ful,
Crost and came near, lifted adoring eyes,
Bow'd at her side and utter'd whisper
ingly

'Enid, the pilot star of my lone life,
Enid, my eaily and my only love,
Enid, the loss of whom hath turn'd me
wild—
What chance is this? how is it I see you
here?
Ye are in my power at last, are in my
power!
Yet few me not—I call mine own self
wild,
But keep a touch of sweet civility
Here in the heat of waste and wilderness
I thought, but that your father cume
between,
In former days you saw me favourably
And if it were so do not keep it back
Make me a little happier let me know it
Owe you me nothing for a life half lost?
Yea, yea, the whole dear debt of all you
are
• And, Enid, you and he, I see with joy,
Ye sit apart, you do not speak to him,
You come with no attendance, prie or
maid,
To serve you—deth he love you as of old?
For, call it lovers' quanels, yet I know
Tho' men may bicker with the things they
love,
They would not make them laughable in
all eyes,
Not while they loved them, and you
wretched dress,
A wretched insult on you, dumbly speaks

Your story, that this man loves you no
more
Your beauty is no beauty to him now
A common chance—right well I know it
—pall'd—
For I know men—not will ye win him
back,
For the man's love once gone never
returns
But here is one who loves you as of old,
With more exceeding passion than of old
Good, speak the word—my followis sing
him round
He sits unarm'd, I hold a finger up,
They understand nay, I do not mean
blood
Nor need ye look so scared at what I say
My malice is no deeper than a mort,
No stronger than a wall—there is the
keep,
He shall not cross us more, speak but
the word
Or speak it not, but then by Him that
made me
The one true lover whom you ever own'd,
I will make use of all the power I have
O pardon me! the madness of that hour,
When first I parted from thee, moves me
yet'

At this the tender sound of his own
voice
And sweet self pity, or the fancy of it,
Made his eye moist, but Enid ie i'd his
eyes,
Moist as they were, wine heated from the
feast,
And answer'd with such craft as women
use,
Guilty or guiltless, to stave off a chance
That bierks upon them perilously, and
said

'Eair, if you love me as in former
yeus,
And do not practise on me, come with
morn,
And snatch me from him as by violence,
Leave me to night—I am weary to the
death'

Low at leave taking, with his brandish'd plume
 Brushing his instep, bow'd the all-amorous Earl,
 And the stout Prince bad him a loud good night
 He moving homeward babbled to his men,
 How Enid never loved a man but him,
 Nor caied a broken egg shell for her lord
 But Enid left alone with Prince Geraint,
 Debating his command of silence given,
 And that she now perforce must violate it,
 Held commune with herself, and while she held
 He fell asleep, and Enid had no heart
 To wake him, but hung o'er him, wholly pleased
 To find him yet unwounded after fight,
 And hear him breathing low and equally
 Anon she rose, and stepping lightly,
 heap'd
 The pieces of his armour in one place,
 All to be there against a sudden need,
 Then dozed awhile herself, but overtoil'd
 By that day's grief and travel, evermore
 Seem'd catching at a rootless thorn, and then
 Went slipping down horrible precipices,
 And strongly striking out her limbs
 awoke,
 Then thought she heard the wild Eail at the door,
 With all his rout of random followers,
 Sound on a dreadful trumpet, summoning her,
 Which was the red cock shouting to the light,
 As the gray dawn stole o'er the dewy world,
 And glimmer'd on his armour in the room
 And once again she rose to look at it,
 But touch'd it unawares jangling, the casque
 Fell, and he started up and stared at her
 Then breaking his command of silence given,
 She told him all that Eail Limous had said,
 Except the passage that he loved her not,

Noi left untold the craft herself had used,
 But ended with apology so sweet,
 Low spoken, and of so few words, and seem'd
 So justified by that necessity,
 That tho' he thought 'was it for him she wept
 In Devon? he but gave a wrathful groan,
 Saying, 'Your sweet faces make good fellows fools
 And traitors Call the host and bid him bring
 Charger and palfrey' So she glided out
 Among the heavy breathings of the house,
 And like a household Spirit at the walls
 Bent, till she woke the sleepers, and return'd
 Then tending her rough lord, tho' all unask'd,
 In silence, did him service as a squire,
 Till issuing arm'd he found the host and cried,
 'Thy reckoning, friend?' and ere he learnt it, 'Take
 Five horses and their armours,' and the host
 Suddenly honest, answer'd in amaze,
 'My lord, I scarce have spent the worth of one.'
 'Ye will be all the wealthier,' said the Prince,
 And then to Enid, 'Forward' and to dry
 I charge you, Enid, more especially,
 What thing soever ye may hear, or see,
 Or fancy (tho' I count it of small use
 To charge you) that ye speak not but obey'
 And Enid answer'd, 'Yes, my lord,
 I know
 Your wish, and would obey, but riding first,
 I hear the violent threats you do not hear,
 I see the danger which you cannot see
 Then not to give you warning, that seems hard,
 Almost beyond me yet I would obey'

'Yea so,' said he, 'do it be not too wise,
Seeing that ye are wedded to a man,
Not all mismatched with a yawning clown,
But one with aims to guard his head and yours,
With eyes to find you out however far,
And ears to hear you even in his dreams.'

With that he turn'd and look'd as keenly at her
As careful robins eye the delver's toil,
And that within her, which a wanton fool,
Or hasty judge would have call'd her guilt,
Made her cheek burn and either eyelid fall
And Geraint look'd and was not satisfied

Then forward by a way which, beaten boid,
Led from the territory of false Limours
To the waste earldom of another eurl,
Doorm, whom his shaking vassals call'd the Bull,
Went Enid with her sullen follower on
Once she look'd back, and when she saw him ride
More near by many a rood than yester-morn,
It wellnigh made her cheerful, till Geraint
Waving an angry hand as who should say

'Ye watch me,' sadden'd all her heart again
But while the sun yet beat a dewy blade,
The sound of many a heavily-galloping hoof
Smote on her ear, and turning round she saw
Dust, and the points of lances bicker in it
Then not to disobey her lord's behest,
And yet to give him warning, for he rode
As if he heard not, moving back she held
Her finger up, and pointed to the dust
At which the warrior in his obstinacy,
Because she kept the letter of his word,
Was in a manner pleased, and turning,
stood
And in the moment after, wild Limours,

Borne on a black horse, like a thunder cloud
Whose skirts are loosen'd by the breaking storm,
Half ridden off with by the thing he rode,
And all in passion uttering a dry shriek,
Dash'd on Geraint, who closed with him,
and bore
Down by the length of lance and arm beyond
The crupper, and so left him stunn'd or dead,
And overthrew the next that follow'd him,
And blindly rush'd on all the rout behind
But at the flash and motion of the man
They vanish'd panic stricken, like a shoal
Of daiting fish, that on a summer morn
Adown the crystal dykes at Camelot
Come slipping o'er them shadows on the sand,
But if a man who stands upon the brink
But lift a shining hand against the sun,
There is not left the twinkle of a fin
Betwixt the cressy islets white in flower,
So, scared but at the motion of the man,
Fled all the boon companions of the Earl,
And left him lying in the public way,
So vanish friendships only made in wine

Then like a stormy sunlight smiled
Geraint,
Who saw the chingers of the two that fell
Start from their fallen lords, and wildly fly,
Mixt with the flyers 'Horse and man,'
he said,
'All of one mind and all right honest
friends'
Not a hoof left and I methinks till now
Was honest—paid with horses and with
arms,
I cannot steal or plunder, no nor beg
And so what say ye, shall we strip him
there
Your lover? has your palfrey herit enough
To bear his umouri? shall we fist, or
dine?
No?—then do thou, being right honest,
pity
That we may meet the horsemen of Eail
Doorm,

I too would still be honest' Thus he said
And sadly gazing on her bidle reins,
And answering not one word, she led the way

But as a man to whom a dreadful loss
Falls in a far land and he knows it not,
But coming back he leuins it, and the loss
So puns him that he sickens nigh to death,
So fareit with Geraint, who being pluck'd
In combat with the follower of Limour,
Bled underneath his armour seictly,
And so rode on, nor told his gentle wife
What ail'd him, hardly knowing it himself,
Till his eye drukend and his helmet wagg'd,
And at a sudden swerving of the road,
Tho' happily down on a bank of grass,
The Prince, without a word, from his horse fell

And Enid heard the clashing of his fall,
Suddenly came, and at his side all pale
Dismounting, loosed the fastenings of his arms,
Nor let her true hand falter, nor blue eye
Moisten, till she had lighted on his wound,
And tearing off her veil of faded silk
Had bried her forehead to the blistering sun,
And swathed the hant that drun'd her dear lord's life
Thenafter all was done that hand could do,
She rested, and her desolution came
Upon her, and she wept beside the way

And many past, but none regarded her,
For in that realm of lawless turbulence,
A woman weeping for her murder'd mate
Was cared as much for as a summer shower
One took him for a victim of Eail Doorm,
Nor dared to waste a perilous pity on him
Another hurrying past, a man at-aims,
Rode on a mission to the bandit Eail,
Half whistling and half singing a coarse song,
He drove the dust against her veilleseyes
Another, flying from the wrath of Doorm
Before an ever fancied arrow, made

The long way smoke beneath him in his fear,
At which her palfey whinnyng lifted heel,
And scou d into the coppices and was lost,
While the great chager stood, grieved like a man

But at the point of noon the huge Eail Doorm,
Broad faced with under fringe of russet beard,
Bound on a foray, rolling eyes of prey,
Came riding with a hundred lances up,
But ere he came, hi e one that hails a ship,
Cried out with a big voice, 'Whit, is he dead?'
'No, no, not dead!' she answer'd in all haste
'Would some of your kind people take
him up,
And bear him hence out of this cruel sun?
Most sure am I, quite sure, he is not dead'

Then said Eail Doorm 'Well, if he be not dead,
Why wail yu for him thus? ye seem a child
And be he di ud, I count you for a fool,
Your wailing will not quicken him dead
or not,
Ye mu a comely face with a dot tears
Yit, since the face is comely—some of you,
Here, take him up, and bear him to our hall
An if he live, we will huse him of our band,
And if he die, why earth has earth enough
To hide him See we take the charge too,
A noble one'
He spake, and past away,
But left two brawny spearmen, who advanced,
Each growling like a dog, when his good bone
Seems to be pluck'd at by the village boys
Who love to vex him eating, and he fears
To lose his bone, and lays his foot upon it,
Gnawing and growling so the ruffians growld,
Feeling to lose, and all for a dead man,

Then chance of booty from the morning's
laid,
Yet raised and laid him on a litter bier,
Such as they brought upon their forays out
For those that might be wounded , laid
him on it

All in the hollow of his shield, and took
And bore him to the naked hall of Doom
(His gentle chaiger following him unled)
And cast him and the bier in which he
lay

Down on 'n oaken settle in the hall,
And then departed, hot in haste to join
Then luckier mates, but growling as
before,
And cursing then lost time, and the dead
man,
And then own Earl, and then own souls,
and hei
They might as well have blest hei she
was deaf
To blessing or to cursing save from one

So for long hours sat Enid by her lord,
There in the naked hall, propping his
head,
And chafing his pale hands, and calling
to him
Till at the last he waken'd from his swoon,
And found his own dear bride propping
his head,
And chatting his faint hands, and calling
to him ,
And felt the warm tears falling on his face ,
And said to his own heart, 'She weeps
for me ,'
And yet lay still, and feign'd himself as
dead,
That he might prove her to the uttermost ,
And say to his own heart, 'She weeps
for me '

But in the falling afternoon return'd
The huge Earl Doom with plunder to
the hall
His lusty spearmen follow'd him with
noise
Each hurling down a heap of things that
rang
Against the proue nent, cast his lance aside,

And doff'd his helm and then there
flutter'd in,
Half bold, half-frighted, with dilated eyes,
A tribe of women, diess'd in many hues,
And mingled with the spearmen and
Eul Doom

Struck with a knife's haft laid against
the board,
And call'd for flesh and wine to feed his
spears
And men brought in whole hogs and
quater beeves,
And all the hall was dim with steam of
flesh
And none spake word, but all sat down
at once,
And ate with tumult in the naked hall,
Feeding like horses when you hear them
feed ,

Till Enid shrunk far back into herself,
To shun the wild wysis of the lawless tribe
But when Earl Doom had eaten all he
would,
He roll'd his eyes about the hall, and
found
A damsel drooping in a corner of it
Then he remember'd hei, and how she
wept ,
And out of hei there cume a power upon
him ,
And rising on the sudden he said, ' Eat !
I never yet beheld a thing so pale
God's curse, it makes me mad to see you
weep
Eat ! Look yourself Good luck had
you good man ,
For were I dead who is it would weep
for me ?
Sweet lady, never since I first drew breath
Have I beheld a lily like yourself
And so there lived some colour in your
cheek ,

There is not one among my gentlewomen
Were fit to wear your slipper for a glove
But listen to me, and by me be ruled ,
And I will do the thing I have not done ,
For ye shall share my cuardom with me ,
gul ,
And we will live like two birds in one
nest ,

And I will fetch you fōrge from all fields,
For I compel all creatures to my will'

He spoke the brawny spearmen let his cheek
Bulge with the unswallow'd piece, and tuining stared,
While some, whose souls the old serpent long had diawn
Down, as the worm draws in the wither'd leaf
And makes it earth, hiss'd each at other's ear
What shall not be recorded—women they, Women, or what had been those gracious things,
But now desired the humbling of their best,
Yea, would have help'd him to it and all at once
They hated her, who took no thought of them,
But answer'd in low voice, her meek head yet
Drooping, 'I pray you of your courtesy,
He being as he is, to let me be'

She spake so low he hardly heard her speak,
But like a mighty patron, satisfied
With what himself had done so graciously,
Assumed that she had thank'd him, add ing, 'Yea,
Eat and be glad, for I account you mine'

She answer'd meekly, 'How should I be glad
Henceforth in all the world at anything,
Until my lord aise and look upon me?'

Here the huge Eail cried out upon hei talk,
As all but empty heart and weariness
And sickly nothing, suddenly seized on her,
And bare hei by main violence to the boord,
And thrust the dish before hei, crying,
'Eat'

'No, no,' said Enid, vext, 'I will not eat
Till yonder man upon the bier arise,
And eat with me' 'Drink, then,' he answer'd 'Here'
(And fill'd a horn with wine and held it to her,) 'Lo! I, myself, when flush'd with fight, or hot,
God's curse, with anger—often I myself, Before I well have drunken, scuse can eat
Dink therefore and the wine will change your will'

'Not so,' she cried, 'by Heaven, I will not dink
Till my deur lord arise and bid me do it,
And drink with me, and if he rise no more,
I will not look at wine until I die'

At this he turn'd all red and paced his hall,
Now gnawd his under, now his upper lip,
And coming up close to her, said at last
'Girl, for I see ye scoun my courtesies,
Take warning yonder man is surely dead,
And I compel all creatures to my will
Not eat nor drink? And wherefore wil for one,
Who put your beauty to this flout and scoun

By dressing it in rags? Amazed im I,
Beholding how ye butt against my wish,
That I forbear you thus cross me no more
At least put off to please me this poor gown,
This silken rag, this beggu-woman's weed
I love that beauty should go beautifully
For see ye not my gentlewomen here,
How gay, how suited to the house of one
Who loves that beauty should go beautifully?
Rise therefore, robe yourself in this obey'

He spoke, and one among his gentle women
Display'd a splendid silk of foreign loom,
Where like a shoaling sea the lovely blue
Play'd into green, and thicker down the front
With jewels than the swaid with drops of dew,
When all night long a cloud clings to the hill,
And with the dawn ascending lets the day
Strike where it clung so thickly shone the gems

But Enid answer'd, harder to be moved
Than hardest tyrants in their day of power,
With life-long injuries burning unavenged,
And now their hour has come, and Enid said

'In this poor gown my dear lord found me first,
And loved me serving in my father's hall
In this poor gown I rode with him to court,
And there the Queen array'd me like the sun
In this poor gown he bad me clothe myself,
When now we rode upon this fatal quest
Of honour, where no honour can be gain'd
And this poor gown I will not cast aside
Until himself aise a living man,
And bid me cast it I have griefs enough
Pray you be gentle, pray you let me be
I never loved, can never love but him
Yea, God, I pray you of your gentleness,
'He being as he is, to let me be'

Then stode the brute Eail up and down his hall,
And took his russet beard between his teeth,
Last, coming up quite close, and in his mood
Crying, 'I count it of no moie avail,
Dame, to be gentle than ungentele with you,
Take my salute,' unknightly with flat hand,
However lightly, smote her on the cheek

Then Enid, in her utter helplessness,
And since she thought, He had not damed to do it,
Except he surely knew my lord was dead,
Sent forth a sudden sharp and bitter cry,
As of a wild thing taken in the trap,
Which sees the trapper coming thro' the wood

This heud Geraint, and grasping at his sword,
(It lay beside him in the hollow shield),
Made but a single bound, and with a sweep of it
Shoie thro' the swathy neck, and like a ball
The russet bearded head roll'd on the floor
So died Earl Doorm by him he counted dead
And all the men and women in the hall
Rose when they saw the dead man rise,
and flicd
Yelling as from a spectre, and the two
Were left alone together, and he said

'Enid, I have used you worse than that dead man,
Done you moie wrong we both have undergone
That trouble which has left me thince your own
Hencefor ward I will rither die than doubt
And here I lay this penance on myself,
Not, tho' mine own eais heard you yestermoin—
You thought me sleeping, but I heard you say,
I heard you say, that you were no true wife
I swear I will not ask your meaning in it
I do believe yourself aginst yourself,
And will henceforward rither die than doubt'

And Enid could not say onc tender word,
She fel so blunt and stupid at the heart
She only pray'd him, 'Fly, they will return

And slay you, fly, your charger is without,
My palfrey lost' 'Then, Enid, shall you ride
Behind me' 'Yea, said Enid, 'let us go,'
And moving out they found the stately hoise,
Who now no more a vassal to the thief,
But free to stretch his limbs in lawful fight,
Neigh'd with all gladness as they came,
and stoop'd
With a low whinny toward the paun and she
Kiss'd the white star upon his noble front,
Glad also, then Geraint upon the hoise
Mounted, and reach'd a hand, and on his foot
She set her own and climb'd, he turn'd his face
And kiss'd her climbing, and she cast her arms
About him, and at once they rode awry

And never yet, since high in Paradise
O'er the four rivers the first roses blew,
Came puuer pleasure unto mortal kind
Than lived th'o' her, who in that perilous hour
Put hand to hand beneath her husband's heart,
And felt him hers agan she did not weep,
But o'er her meek eyes came a happy mist
Like that which kept the heart of Eden green
Before the useful trouble of the sun
Yet not so misty were her meek blue eyes
As not to see before them on the path,
Right in the gateway of the bandit hold,
A knight of Aithur's court, who laid his lance
In rest, and made as if to fall upon him
Then, fearing for his huit and loss of blood,
She, with her mind all full of what had chanced,
Shriek'd to the stranger 'Slay not a dead man!'

'The voice of Enid,' said the knight, but she,
Beholding it was Edyn son of Nudd,
Was moved so much the more, and shriek'd agan,
'O cousin, slay not him who gave you life'
And Edyn moving frankly forward spake
'My lord Geraint, I greet you with all love,
I took you for a bandit knight of Doorm,
And scau not, Enid, I should fall upon him,
Who love you, Prince, with something of the love
Wherewith we love the Heaven that chastens us
For once, when I was up so high in pride
That I was halfway down the slope to Hell,
By overthrowing me you thicw me higher
Now, made a knight of Aithur's Table Round,
And since I knew this Evil, when I myself
Was half a bandit in my lawless hour,
I come the mouthpiece of our King to Doorm
(The King is close behind me) bidding him
Disband himself, and scatter all his powers,
Submit, and hear the judgment of the King'

'He hears the judgment of the King of kings,'
Cried the wan Prince, 'and lo, the powers of Doorm
Are scatter'd,' and he pointed to the field,
Where, huddled here and there on mound and knoll,
Were men and women staining and aghast
While some yet fled, and then he plainly told
How the huge Earl lay slain within his hall
But when the knight besought him,
'Follow me,
Prince, to the camp, and in the King's own ear

Speak what has chanced , ye surely have
endured

Strange chances here alone , ' that other
flush'd ,

And hung his head , and halted in reply ,
Feeling the mild face of ' the blameless
King ,

And after madness acted question ask'd
Till Edyn crying , ' If ye will not go
To Arthur , then will Arthur come to you ,'
' Enough , ' he said , ' I follow , ' and they
went

But Ena in their going had two fears ,
One from the bandit scatter'd in the field ,
And one from Edyn Every now and
then ,

When Edyn rein'd his charger at her side ,
She shrank a little In a hollow land ,
From which old fires have broken , men
may scar

Fresh fire and ruin He , perceiving , said
' Fair and dear cousin , you that most
had cause

To fear me , fear no longer , I am changed
Yourself were first the blameless cause to
make

My nature's painful sparkle in the blood
Break into furious flame , being impulsd
By Ynol and yourself , I schemed and
wrought

Until I overthun'd him , then set up
(With one main purpose even at my heart)
My haughty jousts , and took a paramour ,
Did her mock honour as the fairest fun ,
And , toppling over all antagonism ,
So wav'd in pride , that I believed myself
Unconquerable , for I was wellnigh mad
And , but for my main purpose in these
jousts ,

I should have slain your father , seized
yourself

I lived in hope that sometime you would
come

To these my lists with him whom best
you loved ,

And there , poor cousin , with your meek
blue eyes ,

The truest eyes that ever answer'd Heaven ,
Behold me overthrown and trampled on him

Then , had you cried , or I neilt , or pray'd
to me ,

I should not less have kill'd him And
you came , —

But once you came , — and with your own
true eyes

Beheld the man you loved (I speak as one
Speaks of a service done him) overthrow
My proud self , and my purpose threc
yeus old ,

And set his foot upon me , and give me
life

There was I broken down , there was I
saved

Tho' thence I rode all-shamed , hating
the life

He gave me , meaning to be rid of it
And all the penance the Queen laid upon
me

Was but to rest awhile within her court ,
Where first as sullen as a beast new caged ,
And waiting to be treated like a wolf ,
Because I knew my deeds were known ,
I found ,

Instead of scornful pity or pure scorn ,
Such fine reserve and noble reticence ,
Manner so kind , yet stately , such a grace
Of tenduest courtesy , that I began
To glance behind me at my former life ,
And find that it had been the wolf's in
deed

And oft I talk'd with Dubric , the high
saint ,

Who , with mild heat of holy oratory ,
Subdued me somewhat to that gentleness ,
Which , when it weds with manhood ,
makes a man

And you were often there 'bout the Queen ,
But saw me not , or mark'd not if you saw ,
Nor did I care or dare to speak with you ,
But kept myself aloof till I was changed ,
And fear not , cousin , I am changed
indeed '

He spoke , and Enid easily believed ,
Like simple noble natures , credulous
Of what they long for , good in friend or
foe ,

These most in those who most have done
them ill

And when they reach'd the camp the
King himself
Advanced to greet them, and beholding
her
Tho' pale, yet happy, ask'd her not a
word,
But went apart with Edyn, whom he held
In converse for a little, and return'd,
And, gravely smiling, lifted her from
horse,
And kiss'd her with all purness, brother
like,
And shew'd an empty tent allotted her,
And glancing for a minute, till he saw her
Pass into it, turn'd to the Prince, and
said

'Prince, when of late ye play'd me for
my leue
To move to your own land, and there
defend
Your marches, I was prick'd with some
reproof,
As one that let foul wrong stagnate and
be,
By having look'd too much thro' alien
eyes,
And wrought too long with delegated
hands,
Not used mine own but now behold me
come
To cleanse this common sewer of all my
realm,
With Edyn and with others have ye
look'd
At Edyn? have ye seen how nobly
changed?
This work of his is great and wonderful
His very face with change of heart is
changed,
The world will not believe a man repents
And this wise world of ours is mainly
right
Full seldom doth a man repent, or use
Both grace and will to pick the vicious
quinch
Of blood and custom wholly out of him,
And make all clean, and plant himself
afresh
Edyn has done it, weeding all his heart

As I will weed this land before I go
I, therefore, made him of our Table
Round,
Not rashly, but have proved him every
way
One of our noblest, our most valorous,
Sincerest and most obedient and indeed
This work of Edyn wrought upon himself
After a life of violence, seems to me
A thousand fold more great and wonderful
Than if some knight of mine, risking his
life,
My subject with my subjects under him,
Should make an onslaught single on a
calm
Of robbers, tho' he slew them one by one,
And were himself nigh wounded to the
death'

So spake the King, low bow'd the
Prince, and felt
His work was neither great nor wonderful,
And past to Enid's tent, and thither came
The King's own leech to look into his
hurt,
And Enid tended on him there, and there
Her constant motion round him, and the
breath
Of her sweet tendance hovering over him,
Fill'd all the genial courses of his blood
With deeper and with ever deeper love,
As the south west that blowing Bala lake
Fills all the sacred Dec So past the days

But while Geraint lay healing of his
hurt,
The blameless King went forth and cast
his eyes
On each of all whom Uther left in charge
Long since, to guard the justice of the
King
He look'd and found them wanting, and
as now
Men weed the white hoise on the Berk
shrie hills
To keep him bright and clean is hereto-
fore,
He rooted out the slothful officer
Or guilty, which for bribe had wink'd at
wrong,

And in then chauns set up a stronger race
With hearts and hands, and sent a thousand
sand men

To till the wastes, and moving everywhere
Clear'd the dark places and let in the law,
And broke the bandit holds and cleansed
the land

Then, when Geraint was whole again,
they past
With Arthur to Caelelon upon Usk.
There the great Queen once more embraced her friend,
And clothed her in apparel like the day
And tho' Geraint could never take again
That comfort from then converse which
he took

Before the Queen's fai name was breathed upon,
He rested well content that all was well
Thence after tarrying for a space they rode,
And fifty knights rode with them to the shores
Of Severn, and they past to their own land

And there he kept the justice of the King
So vigorously yet mildly, that all hearts
Applauded, and the spiteful whispes died
And being ever foremost in the chase,
And victor at the tilt and tournament,
They call'd him the great Prince and man
of men

But Enid, whom the ladies loved to call
Enid the Fair, a grateful people named
Enid the Good, and in then halls arose
The cry of chilidren, Enids and Geraints
Of times to be, nor did he doubt her more,
But rested in her fealty, till he crown'd
A happy life with a fair death, and fell
Against the heathen of the Northern Sea
In battle, fighting for the blameless King

MERLIN AND VIVIEN.

A STORM was coming, but the winds were still,
And in the wild woods of Broceliande,
Before an oak, so hollow, huge and old
It look'd a tower of ruin'd masonwork,
At Merlin's feet the wily Vivien lay

Whence came she? One that bare in bitter grudge

The scorn of Arthur and his Table, Maik
The Cornish King, had heard a wandering voice,

A minstrel of Caelelon by strong storm
Blown into shelter at Tintagl, say
That out of naked knightlike purity
Sir Lancelot worshipt no unmarried girl
But the great Queen herself, fought in her name,
Swore by her—vows like theirs, that high in heaven
Love most, but neither marry, nor are given
In marriage, angels of our Lord's report

He ceased, and then—for Vivien sweetly said

(She sat beside the banquet nearest Maik),
'And is the fai example follow'd, Sir,
In Arthur's household?'—answer'd innocently

'Ay, by some few—ay, truly—youths that hold

It more besems the perfect virgin knight
To worship woman as true wife beyond
All hopes of gaining, than as maiden gulf
They place their pride in Lancelot and the Queen

So passionate for an utter purity
Beyond the limit of then bond, are these,
For Arthur bound them not to singleness
Brave hearts and clean! and yet—God guide them—young'

Then Mark was half in heart to hurl
his cup

Straight at the speaker, but forbore he rose

To leave the hall, and, Vivien following him,
Turn'd to her 'Here are snakes within
the grass,'

And you methinks, O Vivien, save ye fear
The monkish manhood, and the mask of pure

Worn by this court, can stin them till they sting'

And Vivien answer'd, smiling scornfully,
 ' Why feu? because that foster'd at thy court
 I savor of thy—virtues? feu them? no
 As Love, if Love be perfect, casts out fear,
 So Hate, if Hate be perfect, casts out fear
 My father died in battle aginst the King,
 My mother on his corpse in open field,
 She bore me there, for born from death
 was I
 Among the dead and sown upon the wind—
 And then on thee! and shown the truth
 betimes,
 That old true filth, and bottom of the well,
 Where Truth is hidden Gracious lessons thine
 And maxims of the mud! "This Aithur pure!
 Great Nature thro' the flesh herself hath made
 Gives him the lie! There is no being pure,
 My cheiub, suth not Holy Writ the same?"—
 If I were Aithur, I would have thy blood
 Thy blessing, stunkless King! I bring thee back,
 When I have ferited out then burrowings,
 The hearts of all this Order in mine hand—
 Ay—so that fate and craft and folly close,
 Perchance, one cull of Aithur's golden beard
 To me this narrow guzzled fork of thine
 Is cleaneer fashion'd—Well, I loved thee
 fist,
 That waips the wit'

Loud laugh'd the graceless Mark
 But Vivien, into Camclot stealing, lodged
 Low in the city, and on a festal day
 When Guinevere was crossing the great hall
 Cast herself down, knelt to the Queen,
 and wail'd

' Why kneel ye there? What evil have ye wrought?
 Rise!' and the damsel bidden rise arose
 And stood with folded hands and down ward eyes
 Of glancing coiner, and ill meekly said,
 'None wrought, but suffer'd much, an orphan maid!
 My father died in battle for thy King,
 My mother on his corpse—in open field,
 The sad set sounding wastes of Lyonsesse—
 Poor wictch—no friend!—and now by
 Mark the King
 For that small chain of fortune mine,
 pursued—
 If any such be mine—I fly to thee
 Sive, sive me thou—Woman of women—
 thine
 The width of beauty, thine the crown of power,
 Be thine the balm of pity, O Heaven's own white
 Euth angel, stunless bride of stunless King—
 Help, for he follows! take me to thyself!
 O yield me shclter for mine innocency
 Among thy maidens!'

Hear her slow sweet cry
 Feu tremulous, but humbly hopeful, rose
 First on her hemis, while the Queen
 who stood
 All glittering like May sunshine on May leaves
 In green and gold, and plumed with green
 replied,
 ' Peice, child! of overprise and over blame
 We choose the last Our noble Aithur,
 him
 Ye scarce can overpraise, will heu and know
 Nay—we believe all evil of thy Mark—
 Well, we shall test thee farther, but this hour
 We ride a hawking with Sir Lancelot
 He hath given us a fur falcon which he train'd,
 We go to prove it Bide ye here the while'

She past, and Vivien murmur'd after
 'Go !'
 I bide the while' Then tho' the portal
 aich
 Peering askance, and muttering broken
 wise,
 As one that labours with an evil dream,
 Beheld the Queen and Lancelot get to
 horse

'Is that the Lancelot' goodly—ay, but
 gaunt
 Courteous—wends for gauntness—takes
 hei hand—
 That glance of theus, but for the street,
 hid been
 A clinging kiss—how hand linges in
 hand !
 Let go it last !—they ride away—to hawk
 For waterfowl Royaler game is mine
 For such a super-sensual sensual bond
 As that gray cricket chupt of it our
 heuth—
 Touch fly with flume—a glance will serve
 —the lins !
 Ah little i ut that bolest in the dyke
 Thy hole by night to let the boundless
 deep
 Down upon su osi cities while they
 dince—
 Oi dicum—of thee they dicum d not—
 nor of me
 These—ay, but each of either ride, and
 dicum
 The mortil dicum that never yet was
 mine—
 Ride, ride and dicum until ye wake—to
 me !
 Then, narrow court and lubber King,
 fiewell !
 For Lancelot will be gracious to the rat,
 And our wise Queen, if knowing that I
 know,
 Will hate, loathe, feai—but honour me
 the more'

Yet while they rode together down the
 plun,
 Then talk was all of training, terms of ut,
 Diet and seeling, jesses, leash and lue

'She is too noble' he said 'to check at
 pies,
 Nor will she ride there is no baseness
 in hei'
 Here when the Queen demanded as by
 chance
 'Know ye the stranger woman?' 'Let
 hei be,'
 Sud Lancelot and unhooded casting off
 The goodly falcon free, she tower'd,
 hei bells,
 Tone under tone, shrill'd, and they listed
 up
 Then eager faces, wondering at the
 strength,
 Boldness and royal knighthood of the bird
 Who pounced hei quarry and slew it
 Many a time
 As once—of old—among the flowers—
 they rode
 But Vivien half forgotten of the Queen
 Among hei damsels broidering sat, heud,
 watch'd
 And whisper'd tho' the peaceful court
 shi crept
 And whisper'd then is Arthur in the
 highest
 Leaven'd the world, so Vivien in the
 lowest,
 Arriv'ng at a time of golden rest,
 And sowing one ill hinc from eai to eai,
 While all the heithen ly at Arthur's feet,
 And no quest came, but ill was joust and
 play,
 Leaven'd his hall They heud and let
 hei be
 Thereafter as an enemy that has left
 Death in the living wicis, and with
 drawn,
 The wily Vivien stole from Arthur's court
 She hated all the knights, and heud in
 thought
 Then lavish comment when hei name
 was named
 For once, when Arthur walking all alone,
 Vext at a rumour issued from himself
 Of some corruption crept among his
 knights,

Had met her, Vivien, being greeted fair,
Would fain have wrought upon his cloudy
mood
With reverent eyes mock loyal, shaken
voice,
And flutter'd adoration, and at last
With dark sweet hints of some who
prized him more
Then who should prize him most, at
which the King
Had gazed upon her blankly and gone by
But one had watch'd, and had not held
his peace
It made the laughter of an afternoon
That Vivien should attempt the blameless
King
And after that, she set herself to gain
Him, the most famous man of all those
times,
Meilin, who knew the range of all their
arts,
Had built the King his havens, ships,
and halls,
Was also Baird, and knew the starry
heavens,
The people call'd him Wizard, whom at
first
She play'd about with slight and sprightly
talk,
And vivid smiles, and faintly venom'd
points
Of slander, glancing here and glazing
there,
And yielding to his kindlier moods, the
Seer
Would watch her at her petulance, and
play,
Ev'n when they seem'd unloveable, and
laugh
As those that watch a kitten, thus he
grew
Tolerant of what he half disdain'd, and
she,
Perceiving that she was but half disdain'd,
Began to break her sports with graver fits,
Turn red or pale, would often when they
met
Sigh fully, or all-silent gaze upon him
With such a first devotion, that the old
man,

Tho' doubtful, felt the flattery, and at
times
Would flatter his own wish in age for love,
And half believe her true for thus it
times
He waver'd, but that other clung to him,
Fixt in her will, and so the seasons went

Then fell on Merlin a great melancholy,
He walk'd with dreams and darkness,
and he found
A doom that ever poised itself to fall,
An ever moaning battle in the mist,
World war of dying flesh against the life,
Death in all life and lying in all love,
The meanest having power upon the
highest,
And the high purpose broken by the
worm

So leaving Arthur's court he gain'd the
beach,
There found a little boat, and stept into
it,
And Vivien follow'd, but he mark'd her
not
She took the helm and he the sul, the
boat
Drove with a sudden wind across the
deep,
And touching Breton sands, they dis
embuk'd
And then she follow'd Merlin all the way,
Ev'n to the wild woods of Broceliande
For Meilin once had told her of a chaim,
The which if any wrought on anyone
With woven paces and with waving arms,
The man so wrought on ever seem'd to lie
Closed in the foul walls of a hollow tower,
From which was no escape for evermore,
And none could find that man for ever
more,
Nor could he see but him who wrought
the charm
Coming and going, and he lay as dead
And lost to life and use and name and
fame
And Vivien ever sought to work the
chaim
Upon the great Enchanter of the Time,

As fancying that her glory would be great
According to his greatness whom she
quench'd

There lay she all her length and kiss'd
his feet,
As if in deepest reverence and in love
A twist of gold was round her han', a
robe
Of samite without price, that more exprest
Than hid her, clung about her lissome
limbs,
In colour like the sun-shining palm
On sallows in the windy gleams of March
And while she kiss'd them, crying,
‘Tample me,
Dear feet, that I have follow'd thro' the
world,
And I will pray you worship, tread me
down
And I will kiss you for it,’ he was mute
So dark a forethought roll'd about his
brun,
As on a dull day in an Ocean cave
The blind wave feeling round his long
sea hall
In silence wherefore, when she listed up
A face of sad appeal, and spake and said,
‘O Merlin, do ye love me?’ and again,
‘O Merlin, do ye love me?’ and once
more,
‘Giert Master, do ye love me?’ he was
mute
And lissome Vivien, holding by his heel,
Writhed toward him,滑ed up his knee
and sat,
Behind his ankle twined her hollow feet
Together, curved an arm about his neck,
Clung like a snake, and letting her left
hand
Droop from his mighty shoulder, as a leaf,
Made with her right a comb of pearl to
part
The lists of such a beard as youth gone out
Had left in ashes then he spoke and said,
Not looking at her, ‘Who are wise in love
Love most, say least,’ and Vivien an
sweid quich,
‘I saw the little elf god eyeless once
In Arthur's arias hall at Camelot

But neither eyes nor tongue—O stupid
child!

Yet you are wise who say it, let me think
Silence is wisdom I am silent then,
And ask no kiss,’ then adding all at once,
‘And lo, I clothe myself with wisdom,’
drew

The vast and shaggy mantle of his beard
Across her neck and bosom to her knee,
And call'd herself a gilded summer fly
Caught in a great old tyrant spider's web,
Who meant to eat her up in that wild
wood

Without one word So Vivien call'd
herself,

But rather seem'd a lovely baleful star
Veil'd in gray vapour, till he sadly
smiled

‘To what request for what strange boon,’
he said,

‘Are these your pretty tricks and fooleries,
O Vivien, the preamble? yet my thanks,
For these have broken up my melancholy,

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily,
‘What, O my Master, have ye found
your voice?

I bid the stranger welcome Thanks at
last!

But yesterday you never open'd lip,
Except indeed to drink no cup had we
In mine own lady palms I call'd the
spung

That gather'd tickling dropwise from
the cleft,

And made a pretty cup of both my hands
And offer'd you it kneeling then you
drink

And knew no more, nor gave me one
poor word,
O no more thanks than might a goat have
given

With no more sign of reverence than a
beard

And when we halted at that other well,
And I was faint to swooning, and you lay
Foot gilt with all the blossom dust of
those

Deep meadows we had traversed, did
you know

That Vivien bathed your feet before her own?

And yet no thanks and all tho' this wild wood

And all this morning when I fondled you Boon, ay, there was a boon, one not so strange—

How had I wrong'd you? surely ye are wise,

But such a silence is more wise than kind'

And Merlin lock'd his hand in hers and said

'O did ye never lie upon the shore, And watch the curl'd white of the coming wave

Glass'd in the slippery sand before it breaks?

Ev'n such a wave, but not so pleasurable, Dark in the glass of some presagful mood, Had I for three days seen, ready to fill And then I rose and fled from Arthur's court

To break the mood You follow'd me unask'd,

And when I look'd, and saw you following still,

My mind involved yourself the newest thing

In that mind mist for shall I tell you truth?

You seem'd that wave about to break upon me

And sweep me from my hold upon the world,

My use and name and fame You pardon child

Your pretty sports have brighten'd all agun

And ask you boon, for boon I owe you thince,

Once for wrong done you by confusion, next

For thanks it seems till now neglected, last

For these your dainty gambols wherefore ask,

And take this boon so strange and not so strange'

And Vivien answer'd smiling mouin- fully

'O not so strange is my long asking it, Not yet so strange as you yourself are strange,

Nor half so strange is that dark mood of yours

I ever fea d ye were not wholly mine, And see, yourself have own'd ye did me wrong

The people call you prophet let it be But not of those that can expound them selves

Take Vivien for expounder, she will call That three days long presagful gloom of yours

No prestige, but the same mischievous mood That makes you seem less noble than yourself,

Whenev'r I have ask'd this very boon, Now ask'd again for see you not, dear love,

That such a mood as that, which lately gloom'd

Your fancy when ye saw me following you,

Must make me fear still more you're not mine,

Must make me yearn still more to prove you mine,

And make me wish still more to learn this chum

Of woven pieces and of waving hands, As proof of trust O Merlin, teach it me The charm so taught will chum us both to us!

For, grant me some slight power upon your fate,

I, feeling that you felt me worthy trust, Should rest and let you rest, knowing you mine

And therefore be as great as ye're named, Not muddled round with selfish reticence

How haud you look and how denymoly! O, if you think this wickedness in me

That I should prove it on you unawares, That makes me passing writhful, then our bond

Had best be loosed for ever but think or not,

By Heaven that heas I tell you the clean
truth,
As clean as blood of babes, as white as
milk.

O Merlin, may this earth, if ever I,
If these unwitty wandering wits of mine,
Ev'n in the jumbled rubbish of a dream,
Have tript on such conjectural tierchey —
May this hard earth cleave to the Nadir
hell

Down, down, and close again, and nip
me flat,
If I be such a trutness Yield my boon,
I'll which I scarce can yield you all I am,
And grant my re reitered wish,
The great proof of your love because I
think,
However wise, ye hardly know me yet,

And Merlin loosed his hand from hers
and said,
'I never was less wise, however wise,
Too curious Vivien, tho' you till of trust,
Than when I told you first of such a
chum
Yea, if ye talk of trust I tell you this,
Too much I trusted when I told you that,
And still d this vice in you which I am d
man

This' woman the first hour, for howsoe'er
In children a great curioseness be will,
Who have to kain themselves and all the
world,
In you, that we no child, for still I find
Your face is practised when I spell the
lines,
I call it,—well, I will not call it vice
But since you name yourself the summer
fly,

I well could wish a cobweb for the gnat,
That settles, beaten back, and beaten back
Settles, till one could yield for weariness
But since I will not yield to give you power
Upon my life and use and name and fame,
Why will ye never ask some other boon?
Yet, by God's rood, I trusted you too much'

And Vivien, like the tenderest hearted
mud
That ever bided tiyst at village stile,

Made answer, either eylid wet with teus
'Nay, Master, be not wrathful with your
maid,

Cuess hei let hei feel herself forgiven
Who feels no heart to ask another boon
I think ye hardly know the tender rhyme
Of "trust me not at all or all in all"
I heard the great Sir Lancelot sing it once,
And it shill answei for me Listen to it

" In Love, if Love be Love, if Love
be ours,
Faith and unsuth can ne'er be equal
powers
Unsuth in rught is want of suth in all

" It is the little iust within the lute,
That by and by will make the music mute,
And ever widening slowly silence all

" The little iust within the lover's lute
Or little puted speck in guner'd fruit,
That rotting inward slowly moulderis all

" It is not worth the keeping Let it go
But shall it ' unswet, darling, answer, no
And trust me not at all or all in all "

O Master, do ye love my tender rhyme?"

And Merlin look'd and half believed
her true,
So tender was her voice, so sur her face,
So sweetly gleam'd her eys behind her
teus
Like sunlight on the plum behind a
shower
And yet he answer'd half indignantly

" Fu o'her was the song that once I
heard

By this huge oak, sung nearly where we sit
For here we met, some ten or twelve of us,
To chase a creature that was curant then
In these wild woods, the hut with golden
hoins

It was the time when first the question
rose

About the founding of a Table Round,
That was to be, for love of God and man
And noble deed, the flower of all the
world

And each incited each to noble deeds
 And while we waited, one, the youngest
 of us,
 We could not keep him silent, out he
 flash'd,
 And into such a song, such fire for fame,
 Such trumpet blowings in it, coming down
 To such a stein and iron-clashing close,
 That when he stopt we long'd to hurl
 together,
 And should have done it, but the beau-
 teous beast
 Scared by the noise upstarted at our feet,
 And like a silver shadow shipt away
 Thro' the dim land, and all day long we
 rode
 Thro' the dim land against a rushing
 wind,
 That glorious roundel echoing in our
 ears,
 And chased the flashes of his golden horns
 Until they vanish'd by the fairy well
 That laughs at iron—as our warriors did—
 Where children cast their pins and nails,
 and cry,
 "Laugh, little wench!" but touch it with
 a sword,
 It buzzes fiercely round the point, and
 there
 We lost him such a noble song was that
 But, Vivien, when you sang me that sweet
 rhyme,
 I felt as tho' you knew this cursed chain,
 Were proving it on me, and that I lay
 And felt them slowly ebbing, name and
 fame'

And Vivien answer'd smiling mourn-
 fully
 'O mine have ebb'd away for evermore,
 And all thro' following you to this wild
 wood,
 Because I saw you sad, to comfort you
 Lo now, what hearts have men! they
 never mount
 As high as woman in her selfless mood
 And touching fame, howe'er ye scorn my
 song,
 Take one verse more—the lady speaks it
 —this

' " My name, once mine, now thine, is
 closeleie mine,
 For fame, could fame be mine, that fame
 were thine,
 And shame, could shame be thine, that
 shame were mine
 So trust me not at all or all in all "

' Says she not well? and there is more
 —this rhyme
 Is like the fair pearl necklace of the
 Queen,
 That burst in dancing, and the pearls
 were spilt,
 Some lost, some stolen, some as reliques
 kept
 But nevermore the same two sister pearls
 Run down the silken thread to kiss each
 other
 On her white neck—so is it with this
 rhyme
 It lives dispersedly in many hands,
 And every minstrel sings it differently,
 Yet is there one true line, the pearl of
 pearls
 " Man dreams of Fame while woman
 wakes to love "
 Yer' Love, tho' Love were of the gross
 est, curvies
 A portion from the solid present, eats
 And uses, curles of the rest, but Fame,
 The love that follows death is nothing
 to us,
 And what is Fame in life but half disfame,
 And counterchanged with darkness? ye
 yourself
 Know well that Envy calls you Devil's
 son,
 And since ye seem the Master of all Art,
 They fain would make you Master of all
 vice'
 And Merlin lock'd his hand in hers and
 sud,
 ' I once was looking for a magic weed,
 And found a fair young squire who sat
 alone,
 Had carved himself a knightly shield of
 wood,
 And then was painting on it fancied arms,

Azue, an Eagle rising o^r, the Sun
In dexter chief, the scroll "I follow
fame"

And speaking not, but leaning over him,
I took his brush and blotted out the bird,
And made a Gardener putting in a graft,
With this for motto, "Rather use than
fame"

You should have seen him blush, but
afterwards

He made a striwait knight O Vivien,
For you, methinks you think you love me
well,

For me, I love you somewhat, rest and
Love

Should have some rest and pleasure in
himself,

Not ever be too curious for a boon,
Too pruulent for a proof against the grain
Of him ye say ye love but Fume with
mcn,

Being but ampler means to serve man
kind,

Should have small rest or pleasure in
himself,

But wok is vassal to the larger love,
That dwarfs the petty love of one to one
Use gave me Fame at first, and Fame
again

Increasing give me use Lo, there my
boon'

What other? for men sought to prove me
vile,

Because I fain had given them greater
wits

And then did Envy call me Devil's son
The sick weak beast seeking to help her-
self

By striking at her better, miss'd, and
brought

Her own claw back, and wounded her
own heart

Sweet were the days when I was all un-
known,

But when my name was lifted up, the
storm

Biake on the mountain and I cared not
for it

Right well know I that Fame is half
disfame,

Yet needs must work my woik That
other fame,

To one at least, who hath not children,
vague,

The cackle of the unborn about the grave,
I cared not for it a single misty star,

Which is the second in a line of stais
That seem a swoid beneath a belt of three,

I never gazed upon it but I dreamt
Of some vast charm concluded in that stai

To make fame nothing Wherefore, if I
feui,

Giving you power upon me thro' this
charm,

That you might play me falsely, having
power,

However well ye think ye love me now
(As sons of kings loving in pupilage
Have turn'd to tyrants when they came
to power)

I rather dread the loss of use than fame,
If you—and not so much from wickedness,
As some wild turn of angel, or a mood
Of ovestrain'd affection, it may be,
To keep me all to you own self,—or else
A sudden spuit of woman's jealousy,—
Should try this chaim on whom ye say ye
love '

And Vivien answer'd smiling as in
wiath

'Have I not sworn? I am not trusted
Good '

Well, hide it, hide it, I shall find it out,
And being found take heed of Vivien
A woman and not trusted, doubtless I
Might feel some sudden turn of unger born
Of your misfath, and your fine epithet
Is accuate too, for this full love of mine
Without the full heart back may meit well
Your tem of ovestrain'd So used as I,
My daily wonder is, I love at all
And as to woman's jealousy, O why not?
O to what end, except a jerlous one,
And one to make me jealous if I love,
Was this fair chaim invented by yourself?
I well believe that all about this world
Ye cage a buxom captive here and there,
Closed in the four walls of a hollow tower
From which is no escape for evermore '

Then the great Master merrily answer'd
her
'Full many a love in loving youth w^s is
mine,
I needed then no charm to keep them mine
But youth and love, and that full heart
of yours
Whereof ye prittie, may now assure you
mine,
So live unchurched! For those who
wrought it first,
The wrist is pruted from the hand that
wived,
The feet unmortised from their ankle-
bones
Who paced it, ages back, but will ye hear
The legend as in guerdon for your rhyme?

'There lived a king in the most Eastern
East,
Less old than I, yet older, for my blood
Hath earnest in it of fair springs to be
A tawny pirate anchored in his port,
Whose bark had plunder'd twenty name-
less isles,
And passing one, at the high peep of
dawn,
He saw two cities in a thousand boats
All fighting for a woman on the sea
And pushing his black craft among them
all,
He lightly scatter'd thens and brought
her off,
With loss of half his people aiow-srun,
A mud so smooth, so white, so wonderful,
They said a light came from her when she
moved
And since the pirate would not yield her
up,
The King impaled him for his piacy,
Then made her Queen but those isle-
nurtured eyes
Waged such unwilling tho' successful war
On all the youth, they sicken'd, counsels
thun'd,
And armes waned, for magnet like she
diew
The rustiest iron of old fighters' heats,
And beasts themselves would worship,
camels kneit

Unbidden, and the brutes of mountun
back
That carry kings in castles, bow'd black
knees
Of homage, ringing with then serpent
hunds,
To make hei smile, hei golden ankle-bells
What wonder, being jealous, that he sent
His horns of proclamation out thro' all
The hundred under-kingdoms that he
swy d
To find a wizud who might teach the King
Some charm, which being wrought upon
the Queen
Might keep her all his own to such a one
He promised more thin ever king has
given,
A league of mountain full of golden mines,
A province with a hundred miles of coast,
A palace and a princess, all for him
But on all those who tried and fail'd, the
King
Pronounced a dismal sentence, meaning
by it
To keep the last low and pretenders back,
Or like a king, not to be trifled with—
Their heads should moulder on the city
gates
And many tried and fail'd, because the
charm
Of nature in hei overboile their own
And many a wizud blow blach'd on the
walls
And many weeks a troop of cannon crows
Hung like a cloud above the gateway
towers'

And Vivien breaking in upon him, said
'I sit and gather honey yet, methinks,
Thy tongue has tript a little ask thyself
The lady never made unwilling war
With those fine eyes she had hei pleasure
in it,
And made her good man jealous with good
cause
And livid there neither dame nor damsel
then
With a lover's loss? we're all as tame,
I mean, as noble, as then Queen was fair?
Not one to flint a venom at her eyes,

Or pinch a murderous dust into her drink,
Or make her pilfer with a poison'd rose?
Well, those were not our days but did
they find

A wizud? Tell me, was he like to thee?

She ceased, and made her lithe arm
round his neck.

Tighten, and then drew back, and let her
eyes

Speak for her, glowing on him, like a
bride's

On her new lord, her own, the first of men

He answer'd laughing, ' Nay, not like
to me

At last they found — his foragers for
chums—

A little glissy headed hairless man,
Who lived alone in a great wild on grass,
Read but one book, and ever reading
grew

So giated down and filed away with
thought,

So lean his eyes were monstrous, while
the skin

Clung but to crate and basket, ribs and
spine

And since he kept his mind on one sole
sum,

Nor ever touch'd fierce wine, nor tasted
flesh,

Nor own d a sensual wish, to him the wall
That sunders ghosts and shadow casting
men

Became a crystal, and he saw them thro' it,
And heard their voices talk behind the
wall,

And learnt their elemental secrets, powers
And forces, often o'er the sun's bright eye
Drew the vast eyehd of an inky cloud,
And lash'd it at the base with slanting
stoin,

Or in the noon of mist and driving rain,
When the lake whiten'd and the pinewood
rou'd,

And the cum'd mountain was a shadow,
sunn'd

The world to peace agun here was the
man

And so by force they dragg'd him to the
King

And then he taught the King to chain
the Queen

In such wise, that no man could see her
more,

Noi saw she save the King, who wrought
the chain,

Coming and going, and she lay as dead,
And lost all use of life but when the King
Made proffes of the league of golden mines,
The province with a hundred miles of coast,
The palace and the princess, that old man
Went back to his old wild, and lived on
grass,

And vanish'd, and his book came down
to me'

And Vivien answer'd smiling saucily
' Ye have the book the charm is written
in it

Good take my counsel let me know it
at once

For keep it like a puzzle chest in chest,
With each chest lock'd and padlock'd
thirty fold,

And whelm all this beneath as vast a
mound

As after furious battle tufts the sun
On some wild down above the windy deep,
I yet should strike upon a sudden means
To dig, pick, open, find and rend the
charm

Then, if I tried it, who should blame me
then?'

And smiling as a master smiles at one
That is not of his school, noi any school
But that where blind and naked Ignorance
Delivers brawling judgments, unashamed,
On all things all day long, he answer'd her

' Thou read the book, my pretty Vivien'
O ty, it is but twenty piges long,
But every page having an ample marge,
And evry marge enclosing in the midst
A square of text that looks a little blot,
The text no langer than the limbs of flies,
And every square of text in twelft chain,
Writ in a language that has long gone by
So long, that mountains have arisen since

With cities on then flanks—thou read the book'

And every margin scribbled, crost, and ciamm'd

With comment, densest condensation, hard
To mind and eye , but the long sleepless
nights

Of my long life have made it easy to me
And none can read the text, not even I ,
And none can read the comment but
myself ,

And in the comment did I find the charm
O, the results are simple , a meie child
Might use it to the hum of anyone ,
And never could undo it ask no more
For tho' you should not prove it upon me,
But keep that oath ye swue, ye might,
perchance,

Assay it on some one of the Table Round,
And all because ye dream they babble of
you '

And Vivien, frowning in true angei,
said

'What dare the full-fed hars say of me ?
They ride abroad redressing human
wrongs '

They sit with knife in meat and wine in
horn !

They bound to holy vows of ch̄rstity !
Were I not woman, I could tell a tale
But you are man, you well can understand
The shame that cannot be explain'd for
shame

Not one of all the drove should touch me
swine !'

Then answer'd Merlin careless of her
words

'You breathe but accusation vast and
vague ,

Spleen-born, I think, and proofless If
ye know ,

Set up the charge ye know , to stand or
fall !'

And Vivien answer'd frowning wrath
fully

'O ay, what say ye to Sir Valence, him
Whose kinsman left him watchei o'er his
wife

And two fair babes, and went to distant
lands ,

Was one year gone, and on returning found
Not two but three ? there lay the reckling,
one

But one how old ! What said the happy
sire ?

A seven months' babe had been a truer gift
Those twelve sweet moons confused his
fatherhood '

Then answer'd Merlin, 'Nay, I know
the tale

Sir Valence wedded with an outland dame
Some cause had kept him sunder'd from
his wife

One child they had it lived with hei
she died

His kinsman travelling on his own affan
Was charged by Valence to bring home
the child

He brought, not found it therefore take
the truth '

'O ay,' said Vivien, 'o'ertrue a tale
What say ye then to sweet Sir Sagimoic,
That ardent man ? "to pluck the flower
in season,"

So says the song, "I trow it is no treason "
O Master, shall we call him overquick
To crop his own sweet rose before the
hour ?'

And Merlin answer'd, 'Overquick art
thou

To catch a loathly plume fall'n from the
wing

Of that foul bird of rapine whose whole
prey

Is man's good name he never wron'g'd
his bride

I know the tale An angry gust of wind
Puff'd out his torch among the myriad-
room'd

And many-corridor'd complexities
Of Arthur's palace then he found a door ,
And daikling felt the sculpted ornament
That wreathen round it made it seem his

own ,
And weared out made for the couch and
slept ,

A stunless man beside a stainless maid,
And either slept, nor knew of other there,
Till the high dawn piercing the royal rose
In Aithur's casement glimmer'd chastely
down,

Blushing upon them blushing, and at once
He rose without a word and parted from
hei,

But when the thing was blazed about the
court,
The brute world howling forced them into
bonds,
And as it chanced they are happy, being
pure'

'O ay,' said Vivien, 'that were likely
too

What say ye then to fur Sir Percivale
And of the horrid foulness that he wrought,
The saintly youth, the spotless lamb of
Christ,

Or some black wether of St Satan's fold
What, in the precincts of the chapel yaid,
Among the knightly brasses of the graves,
And by the cold Hic Jacets of the dead !'

And Merlin answer'd careless of her
chuge,

'A sober man is Percivale and pure,
But once in life was fluster'd with new
wine,

Then piced for coolness in the chapel-
yaid,

Where one of Satan's shepherdesses caught
And meant to stamp him with her master's
mail,

And that he smn'd is not believable,
For, look upon his face !—but if he smn'd,
The sin that practice burns into the blood,
And not the one dark hour which brings
remorse,

Will bland us, after, of whose fold we be
Or else were he, the holy king, whose
hymns

Aie chanted in the minster, worse than all
But is your spleen fioth'd out, or have ye
more ?'

And Vivien answer'd frowning yet in
wrath

'O ay, what say ye to Sir Lancelot, friend

Traitor or true ? that commerce with the
Queen,
I ask you, is it clumour'd by the child,
Or whisper'd in the corner ? do ye know
it ?'

To which he answer'd sadly, 'Yea, I
know it

Sir Lancelot went ambassador, at first,
To fetch hei, and she watch'd him from
her walls

A rumour runs, she took him for the King,
So fixt her fancy on him let them be
But have ye no one word of loyal praise
For Arthus, blameless King and stainless
man ?'

She answel'd with a low and chuckling
laugh

'Man ! is he man at all, who knows and
winks ?

Sees what his fuu bride is and does, and
winks ?
By which the good King means to blind
himself,

And blinds himself and all the Table Round
To all the foulness that they work Myself
Could call him (were it not for womanhood)
The pretty, popular name such manhood
earns,
Could call him the main cause of all their
crime,
Yea, were he not crown'd King, coward,
and fool ?

Then Merlin to his own heart, loathing,
said

'O true and tender ! O my liege and
King !

O selfless man and stainless gentleman,
Who wouldst against thine own eye wit-
ness fain

Have all men true and leal, all women
pure ,

How, in the mouths of base interpreters,
From over fineness not intelligible
To things with every sense as false and foul
As the poach'd filth that floods the middle
street,

Is thy white blamelessness accounted
blame !'

But Vivien, deeming Merlin overborne
By instance, recommended, and let her
tongue
Rage like a fire among the noblest names,
Polluting, and imputing her whole self,
Defaming and defacing, till she left
Not even Lancelet brave, nor Galahad
clean

Her words had issue other than she
will'd
He diag'd his eyebrow bushes down,
and made
A snowy penthouse for his hollow eyes,
And mutter'd in himself, 'Tell her the
charm'
So, if she had it, would she evil on me
To snare the next, and if she have it not
So will she evil What did the wanton say?
"Not mount as high," we scarce can sink
as low
For men at most differ as Heaven and
earth,
But women, wroth and best, as Heaven
and Hell
I know the Table Round, my friends of
old,
All brave, and many generous, and some
chaste
She cloaks the scur of some impulse with
lies,
I well believe she tempted them and fail'd,
Being so bitter for fine plots may fail,
Tho' harlots paint their talk as well as face
With colours of the heart that are not theirs
I will not let her know mine tithes of
times
Face flatterer and backbiter are the same
And they, sweet soul, that most impute a
crime
Are pronest to it, and impute themselves,
Wanting the mental range, or low desire
Not to feel lowest makes them level all,
Yea, they would pare the mountain to the
plain,
To leave an equal baseness, and in this
Are harlots like the crowd, that if they find
Some stain or blemish in a name of note,
Not grieveing that their greatest are so
small,

Inflate themselves with some insane
delight,
And judge all nature from her feet of clay,
Without the will to lift their eyes, and see
Her godlike head crown'd with spiritual
fire,
And touching other worlds I am weary
of her'

He spoke in words past head, in
whispers part,
Half suffocated in the hoary fell
And many winter'd fleece of throat and
chin
But Vivien, gathering somewhat of his
mood,
And hearing 'harlot' mutter'd twice or
thrice,
Leapt from her session on his lap, and
stood
Stiff as a viper frozen, loathsome sight,
How from the rosy lips of life and love,
Flish'd the bone-gnawing skeleton of
death!
White was her cheek, sharp breaths of
anger puff'd
Her fury nostril out, her hand half
clench'd
Went faltering sideways downward to her
belt,
And feeling, had she found a dagger
there
(For in a wile the false love turns to
hate)
She would have stabb'd him, but she
found it not
His eye was calm, and suddenly she took
To bitter weeping like a beaten child,
A long, long weeping, not consolable
Then her false voice made wry, broken
with sobs

'O crueler than was ever told in tale,
Or sung in song! O vainly lavish'd love!
O cruel, there was nothing wild or strange,
Or seeming shameful—for what shame in
love,
So love be true, and not as yours is—
nothing
Poor Vivien had not done to win his trust

Who call'd her what he call'd her—all
her crime,
All—all—the wish to prove him wholly
hers'

She mused a little, and then clapt her
hands
Together with a wailing shriek, and said
'Stabb'd through the heart's affections to
the heart'
Seethed like the kid in its own mother's
milk'

Kill'd with a word worse than a life of
blows'

I thought that he was gentle, being great
O God, that I had loved a smaller man!
I should have found in him a greater
heart

O, I, that flatter'd my true passion, saw
The knights, the court, the King, dark
in your light,

Who loved to make men darker than they
are,

Because of that lugh pleasure which I
had

To seal you sole upon my pedestal
Of worship—I am answer'd, and hence
forth

The course of life that seem'd so flowery
to me

With you for guide and master, only you,
Bcomes the sea-cliff pathway broken
short,

And ending in a ruin—nothing left,
But into some low cave to crawl, and
there,

If the wolf spare me, weep my life awy,
Kill'd with inutterable unkindness'

She paused, she turn'd away, she hung
her head,

The snake of gold slid from her han, the
braid

Slipt and uncoil'd itself, she wept aflesh
And the dul wood grew darker toward
the storm

In silence, while his anger slowly died
Within him, till he let his wisdom go
For ease of heart, and half believed her
true

Call'd her to shelter in the hollow oak,
'Come from the storm,' and having no
reply,
Gazed at the heaving shoulder, and the
face

Hand-hidden, as for utmost grief or
shame,
Then thrice essay'd, by tenderest touching
terms,

To sleek her ruffled peace of mind, in
vain

At last she let herself be conquer'd by him,
And as the eageling newly flown returns,
The seeming injured simple hearted thing
Came to her old perch back, and settled
there

There while she sat, half falling from his
knees,

Half-nestled at his heut, and since he saw
The slow tea creep from her closed eye
ld yet,

About her, more in kindness than in love,
The gentle wizard cast a shielding arm
But she dislink'd herself at once and rose,
Her arms upon her breast across, and
stood,

A virtuous gentlewoman deeply wrong'd,
Upnigh and flush'd before him then she
said

'There must be now no passages of love
Betwixt us twain henceforward evermore,
Since, if I be what I am grossly call'd,
What should be granted which you own
gross heart

Would I reckon worth the taking? I will
go

In truth, but one thing now—better have
died

Thrice than have ask'd it once—could
make me stay—

That proof of trust—so often ask'd in
vain'

How justly, after that vile term of yours,
I find with grief! I might believe you
then,

Who knows? once more Lo! what was
once to me

More matter of the fancy, now hath grown
The vast necessity of heart and life

Farewell, think gently of me, for I fear
My fate or folly, passing gryer youth
For one so old, must be to love thee still
But ere I leave thee let me swear once
more
That if I schemed against thy peace in
this,
May yon just heaven, that darkens o'er
me, send
One flash, that, missing all things else,
may make
My scheming brain a cinder, if I he'

Scarce hid she ceased, when out of
heaven a bolt
(For now the storm was close above them)
struck,
Furiowing a giant oak, and javelining
With darted spikes and splinters of the
wood
The dark earth round He raised his
eyes and saw
The tree that shone white listed thro' the
gloom
But Vivien, fearing heaven had heard her
oath,
And dazzled by the livid flickering fork,
And deafen'd with the stammering cracks
and claps
That follow'd, flying back and crying out,
'O Merlin, tho' you do not love me, save,
Yet save me!' clung to him and hugg'd
him close,
And call'd him dear protector in her
fright,
Nor yet forgot her practice in her fright,
But wroght upon his mood and hugg'd
him close
The pale blood of the wizard at her touch
Took gryer colour, like an opal warm'd
She blamed herself for telling hearsay
tales
She shook from fear, and for her fault
she wept
Of petulancy, she call'd him lord and
liege,
Her see, her baird, her silver star of eve,
Her God, her Merlin, the one passionate
love
Of her whole life, and ever overheard

Bellow'd the tempest, and the rotten
banch
Snapt in the rushing of the river run
Above them, and in change of glae and
gloom
Her eyes and neck glittering went and
came,
Till now the storm, its burst of passion
spent,
Morning and calling out of other lands,
Had left the ravaged woodland yet once
more
To peace, and what should not have been
had been,
For Merlin, overtalk'd and overworn,
Had yielded, told her all the chum, and
slept

Then, in one moment, she put forth
the chum
Of woven paces and of wyring hands,
And in the hollow oak he ly as dead,
And lost to life and use and name and
fame

Then crying 'I have made his glory
mine,'
And shrieking out 'O fool!' the hrolot
leapt
Adown the forest, and the thicket closed
Behind her, and the forest echo'd 'fool'

LANCELOT AND ELAINE

ELAINE the fair, Elaine the loveable,
Elaine, the lily maid of Astolat,
High in her chamber up a tower to the
east
Guarded the sacred shield of Lancelot,
Which first she placed where mornin's
earliest ray
Might strike it, and awale her with the
gleam,
Then fearing lust or soilure fision'd for it
A case of silk, and braided thereupon
All the devices blazon'd on the shield
In their own tinct, and addid, of hei wit,
A border fantasy of branch and flower,
And yellow throated nestling in the nest
Nor rested thus content, but dry by day,

Leaving her household and good fath'ē,
Climb'd
That eastein teweī, and entering barr'd
her dooī,
Stript off the cuse, and read the naked
shield,
Now guess'd a hidden meaning in his
aims,
Now made a pretty history to herself
Of every dint a sword had berten in it,
And every scratch a lance had made
upon it,
Conjecturing when and where this cut
is fiesh,
That ten yeais back, this dealt him at
Caeilye,
That at Caeileon, this at Camelot
And ah God's mercy, what a stroke was
there!
And here a thrust that might have kill'd,
but God
Broke the strong lance, and roll'd his
enemy down,
And saved him so she lived in fantasy

How came the lily maid by that good
shield
Of Lancelot, she that knew not ev'n his
name?
He left it with her, when he rode to tilt
For the great drumond in the diamond
jousts,
Which Arthur had ordain'd, and by that
name
Had named them, since a diamond was
the puze

* For Arthur, long before they crown'd
him King,
Roving the trickless realms of Lyonesse,
Had found a glen, gray boulder and black
tain
A honor lived about the tain, and clive
Like its own mists to all the mountain
side
For here two brothers, one a king, had
met
And fought together, but their names
were lost,
And each had slain his brother at a blow,

And down they fell and made the glen
abhorid
And there they lay till all their bones
were bleach'd,
And lichen'd into colour with the cags
And he, thit once was king, had on a
crown
Of diamonds, one in front, and four aside
And Aithur came, and labouring up the
pass,
All in a misty moonshine, unawares
Had trodden that crown'd skeleton, and
the skull
Biale from the nape, and from the skull
the crown
Roll'd into light, and turning on its rims
Fled like a glittering rivulet to the tain
And down the shingly scaur he plunged,
and caught,
And set it on his head, and in his heart
Heard murmuris, 'Lo, thou likewise shalt
be King'

Thereafter, when a King, he had the
gems
Pluck'd from the crown, and show'd them
to his knights,
Saying, 'These jewels, wherupon I
chanced
Divinely, are the kingdom's, not the
King's—
For public use henceforward let there be,
Once every yeaī, a joust for one of these
For so by nine years' proof we needs
must leain
Which is our mightiest, and ourselves
shall grow
In use of arms and manhood, till we drive
The heathen, who, some say, shall rule
the land
Hereafter, which God hinder' Thus he
spoke
And eight years past, eight jousts had
been, and still
Had Lancelot won the diamond of the
year,
With purpose to present them to the
Queen,
When all were won, but meaning all at
once

To snue hei royal fancy with a boon
Worth half hei realm, hid never spoken
word

Now for the central diamond and the
last
And largest, Aithui, holding then his
court
Hard on the river nigh the place which
now

Is this wold's hugest, let proclaim a joust
At Camelot, and when the time drew nigh
Spake (for she had been sick) to Guine
vere,

'Are you so sick, my Queen, you cannot
move

To these fair jousts?' 'Yea, lord,' she
said, 'ye know it'

'Then will ye miss,' he answer'd, 'the
great deeds

Of Lancelot, and his prowess in the lists,
A sight ye love to look on' And the
Queen

Lifted hei eyes, and they dwelt languidly
On Lancelot, where he stood beside the
King

He thinking that he read hei meaning
there,

'Stay with me, I am sick, my love is
more

Than many diamonds,' yiclded, and a
heart

Love loyal to the last wish of the Queen
(However much he yearn'd to make
complete

The tale of diamonds for his destined boon)
Uiged him to speak aginst the truth,
and say,

'Sir King, mine ancient wound is hardly
whole,

And lets me from the saddle,' and the
King

Glanced first at him, then hei, and went
his way

No sooner gone than suddenly she began

'To blame, my lord Sir Lancelot,
much to blame!'

Why go ye not to these fair jousts? the
knights

Are half of them our enemies, and the
crowd

Will murmur, "Lo the shameless ones,
who take

Their pastime now the trustful King is
gone!"

Then Lancelot vent at having lied in vain
'Are ye so wise? ye were not once so wise,
My Queen, that summer, when ye loved
me first

Then of the crowd ye took no more account
I han of the myrid cricket of the mead,
When its own voice clings to each blade
of grass,

And every voice is nothing As to
knights,

Them suily can I silence with all ease
But now my loyal worship is allow'd
Of all men many a baird, without offence,
Hys link'd our names together in his lay,
Lancelot, the flower of bairwy, Guine
vere,

The pearl of beauty and our knights at
feast

I have pledged us in this union, while the
King

Would listen smiling How then? is
there more?

Hys Arthur spoken aught? or would
yourself,

Now weary of my service and devon,
Henceforth be true to your faultless lord?"

She broke into a little scornful laugh
'Aithui, my lord, Arthur, the faultless
King,

That passionate perfection, my good
lord—

But who can gaze upon the Sun in heaven?
He never spake word of reproach to me,
He never had a glimpse of mine untruth,
He cues not for me only here to day
There gleam'd a vague suspicion in his
eyes

Some meddling rogue has tamper'd with
him—else

Rapt in this fancy of his Table Round,
And swearing men to vows impossible,
To make them like himself but, friend,
to me

He is all fault who hath no fault at all
For who loves me must have a touch of earth,
The low sun makes the colour I am yours,
Not Arthur's, as ye know, save by the bond
And therefore hear my words go to the jousts
The tiny trumpeting gnat can break our dream
When sweetest, and the veimin voices here
May buzz so loud—we scorn them, but they stung'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights
' And with what face, after my pietext made,
Shall I appen, O Queen, at Camelot, I Before a King who honours his own word,
As if it were his God's?'

' Yea,' said the Queen,
' A mortal child without the craft to rule,
Else had he not lost me but listen to me,
If I must find you wit we haue it said
That men go down before your speu at a touch,
But knowing you ue Lancelot, your great name,
This conqueris hide it therefore, go unknown
Win by this kiss you will and our true King
Will then allow your pietext, O my knight,
As all for glory, fai to speak him true,
Ye know right well, how meek soe'er he seem,
No keener hunter after glory breathes
He loves it in his knights more than himself
They prove to him his work win and return'

Thengot Su I ancelot suddenly to horse,
Wioth it himself Not willing to be known,
He left the batten beaten thoroughfure,

Chose the green path that show'd the rarer foot,
And there among the solitary downs,
Full often lost in fancy, lost his way,
Till is he traced a faintly shadow'd track,
That all in loops and links among the dales
Ran to the Castle of Astolat, he saw
Fued from the west, far on a hill, the towers
Thither he made, and blew the gateway horn
Then came an old, dumb, myriad wrinkled man,
Who let him into lodging and disarm'd
And Lancelot muvell'd at the wordless man,
And issuing found the Lord of Astolat
With two strong sons, Su Toire and Su Lavane,
Moving to meet him in the castle court,
And close behind them stept the lily maid Elaine, his daughter mother of the house
There was not some light jest among them rose
With laughter dying down as the great knight
Approach'd them then the Lord of Astolat
' Whence comest thou, my guest, and by what name
Livist between the lips? for by thy state
And presence I might guess thee chief of those,
After the King, who eat in Aithui's halls
Him have I seen the rest, his Table Round,
Known as they ue, to me they ue unknown'

Then answer'd Lancelot, the chief of knights
' Known am I, and of Aithui's hall, and known,
What I by meie mischance haue brought,
my shield
But since I go to joust as one unknown
At Camelot for the diamond, ask me not,
Hereafter ye shall know me—and the shield—

I pray you lend me one, if such you have,
Blank, or at least with some device not
mine'

Then said the Lord of Astolat, 'Here
is Torre's

Hurt in his first tilt was my son, Sir Torre
And so, God wot, his shield is blank
enough

His ye can have' Then added plain Sir
Torre,

'Yea, since I cannot use it, ye may have
it'

Here laugh'd the father saying, 'Fie, Sir
Chul,

Is that an answer for a noble knight?
Allow him! but Lavaine, my younger
here,

He is so full of lustihood, he will ride,
Joust for it, and win, and bring it in an
hour,

And set it in this damsel's golden bau,
To make her thrice as wilful as before'

'Nay, father, nay good father, shame
me not

Before this noble knight,' said young
Lavaine,

'For nothing Surely I but play'd on
Torre

He seem'd so sullen, vext he could not go
A jest, no more! for, knight, the maiden
diermt

That some one put this diamond in her
hand,

And that it was too slippery to be held,
And slipt and fell into some pool or stream,
The castle well, belike, and then I said
That if I went and if I fought and won it
(But all was jest and joke among ourselves)
Then must she keep it safelier All was
jest

But, father, give me leave, an if he will,
To ride to Camelot with this noble knight
Win shall I not, but do my best to win
Young as I am, yet would I do my best'

'So ye will grace me,' answer'd
Lancelot,
Smiling a moment, 'with your fellowship'

O'er these waste downs whereon I lost
myself,

Then were I glad of you as guide and
friend

And you shall win this diamond,—as I
hear

It is a fair large diamond,—if ye may,
And yield it to this maiden, if ye will'

'A fair large diamond,' added plain Sir
Torre,

'Such be for queens, and not for simple
maids'

Then she, who held her eyes upon the
ground,

Elaine, and heard her name so tost about,
Flush'd slightly at the slight dispraiement
Before the stranger knight, who, looking
at her,

Full countly, yet not falsely, thus return'd
'If what is fair be but for what is fair,
And only queens are to be counted so,
Rash were my judgment then, who deem
this maid

Might wear as fair a jewel as is on earth,
Not violating the bond of like to like'

He spoke and ceased the lily maid
Elaine,

Won by the mellow voice before she look'd,
I lifted her eyes, and read his lineaments
The great and guilty love he bare the
Queen,

In battle with the love he bare his lord,
Had mar'd his face, and mark'd it ere
his time

Another sining on such heights with one,
The flower of all the west and all the
world,

Had been the sleeker for it but in him
His mood was often like a fiend, and rose
And drove him into wastes and solitudes
For agony, who was yet a living soul
Mar'd as he was, he seem'd the goodliest
man

That eve among ladies ate in hall,
And noblest, when she lifted up her eyes
However mar'd, of more than twice her
years,

Seam'd with an ancient swordcut on the
cheek,

Afif bruised and bronzed, she lifted up
her eyes
And loved him, with that love which was
her doom

Then the great knight, the darling of
the court,
Loved of the loveliest, into that rude hall
Stept with all gracie, and not with half
dissdau
Hid unde gracie, as in a smaller time,
But kindly man moving among his kind
Whom they with meats and vintage of
their best
And talk and minstrel melody entertain'd
And much they ask'd of court and Table
Round,
And ever well and readyly answer'd he
But Lancelot, when they glanced at
Guinevere,
Suddenly speaking of the wordless man,
Heard from the Baron thit, ten years
before,
The heathen caught and reft him of his
tongue
' He leant and wun'd me of then fierce
design
Against my house, and him they caught
and maim'd,
But I, my sons, and little daughter fled
From bonds or death, and dwelt among
the woods
By the great river in a boatman's hut
Dull days were those, till ou good Arthur
broke
The Pagan yet once more on Badon hill,

" O therore, great lord, doubtless," Lavaine
said, rapt
By all the sweet and sudden passion of
youth
Toward greatness in its elder, ' you have
fought
O tell us—for we live apart—you know
Of Arthur's glorious wars' And Lancelot
spoke
And answer'd him at full, as having been
With Arthur in the fight which all day long
Rang by the white mouth of the violent
Glem,

And in the four loud battles by the shore
Of Duglas, that on Brissa, then the war
That thunder'd in and out the gloomy
skuts
Of Celldon the forest, and again
By castle Gurnion, where the glorious
King
Had on his curass woin ou Lady's Head,
Caived of one emeiald cental'd in a sun
Of silver rrys, that lighten'd as he
breathed,
And at Caeileon had he help'd his lord,
When the strong neighings of the wild
white Horse
Set every gilded parapet shudderling,
And up in Agned-Cathregonon too,
And down the waste sand shores of Tiath
Treriot,
Where many a heathen fell, ' and on the
mount
Of Badon I myself beheld the King
Charge at the head of all his Table Round,
And all his legions crying Chust and him,
And break them, and I saw him, after,
stund
High on a heyp of slam, fiom spur to
plume
Red as the rising sun with heathen blood,
And seeing me, with a great voice hecried,
" They are broken, they aie broken!"
for the King,
However mild he seems at home, noi cares
For triumph in our mimic wais, the
jousts—
For if his own knight cast him down, he
laughs
Saying, his knights aie better men than
he—
Yet in this heathen war the fire of God
Fills him I never sw his like theire lives
No greater leader'

While he utter'd this,
Low to her own heart sud the lily mud,
' Save you grcat self, fur lord,' and
when he fell
From talk of war to traits of pleasantiy—
Being mirthful he, but in a stately kind—
She still took note that when the living
smile

Died from his lips, across him came a cloud
 Of melancholy severe, from which again,
 Whenever in her hovering to and fro
 The lily maid had striven to smile him
 cheer,
 There bade a sudden beaming tenderness
 Of manners and of nature and she
 thought
 That all was nature, all, perchance, for her
 And all night long his face before her lived,
 As when a painter, pouring on a face,
 Divinely thro' all hindrance finds the man
 Behind it, and so paints him that his face,
 The shape and colour of a mind and life,
 Lives for his children, ever at its best
 And fullest, so the face before her lived,
 Dark splendid, speaking in the silence,
 full
 Of noble things, and held her from her
 sleep
 Till morn she rose, half cheated in the
 thought
 She needs must bid farewell to sweet
 Lavaine
 First as in feare, step after step, she stole
 Down the long tower stairs, hesitating
 Anon, she heard Sir Lancelot cry in the
 court,
 'This shield, my friend, where is it?'
 and Livune
 Past inward, as she came from out the
 tower
 There to his proud horse Lancelot turn'd,
 and smooth'd
 The glossy shoulder, humming to himself
 Half-envious of the flattering hand, she
 drew
 Nearest and stood He look'd, and more
 amazed
 Than if seven men had set upon him, saw
 The maiden standing in the dewy light
 He had not dream'd she was so beautiful
 Then came on him a sort of sacred feare,
 For silent, tho' he greeted her, she stood
 Rapt on his face as if it were a God's
 Suddenly flasht on her a wild desire,
 That he should wear her favour at the tilt
 She braved a riotous heat in asking for it
 'Fair lord, whose name I know not—
 noble it is,

I well believe, the noblest—will you wear
 My favour at this tourney?' 'Nay,' said
 he,
 'Fair lady, since I never yet have worn
 Favour of my lady in the lists
 Such is my wont, as those, who know me,
 know'
 'Yes, so,' she answer'd, 'then in wearing
 mine
 Needs must be lesser likelihood, noble
 lord,
 That those who know should know you'
 And he turn'd
 His counsel up and down within his mind,
 And found it true, and answer'd, 'True,
 my child
 Well, I will wear it fetch it out to me
 What is it?' and she told him 'A red
 sleeve
 Broider'd with pearls,' and brought it
 then he bound
 Her to on his helmet, with a smile
 Saying, 'I never yet have done so much
 For any maiden living,' and the blood
 Sprung to her face and fill'd her with
 delight,
 But left her till the pales, when Livune
 Returning brought the yet-unblazon'd
 shield,
 His brother's, which he gave to Lancelot,
 Who prided with his own to see Elene
 'Do me this grace, my child, to have my
 shield
 In keeping till I come' 'A grace to me,'
 She answer'd, 'twice to day I am your
 squane'
 Whereat Livune said, laughing, 'Lily
 maid,
 For few our people call you lily maid
 In earnest, let me bring your colour back,
 Once, twice, and thrice now get you
 hence to bed'
 So kiss'd her, and Sir Lancelot his own
 hand,
 And thus they moved away she stay'd
 a minute,
 Then made a sudden step to the gate,
 and there—
 Her bright hair blown about the serious
 face

Yet tosy kindied with her brother's kiss—
Paused by the gateway, standing neir
the shield
In silence, while she watch'd then arms
far-off
Sparkle, until they dipt below the downs
Then to her tower she climb'd, and took
the shield,
There kept it, and so lived in fantesy

Meanwhile the new companions past
away
Far o'er the long backs of the bushless
downs,
To where Sir Lancelot knew there lived
a knight
Not far from Camelot, now for forty years
A hermit, who had pray'd, labou'rd and
play'd,
And ever labou'ring had scoop'd himself
In the white rock a chapel and a hall
On massive columns, like a shoreclif cave,
And cells and chambers all weie faw
and dry,
The green light from the meadows under
neath
Stuck up and lived along the milky roofs,
And in the meadows tremulous aspen trees
And poplins made a noise of falling
showers
And thither wending there that night they
bode

But when the next day broke from
underground,
And shot red fire and shadows thro' the
cave,
They rose, heaid mass, broke fast, and
rode away
Then Lancelot saying, 'Heu, but hold
my name
Hidden, you ride with Lancelot of the
Lake,'
Abash'd Lorraine, whose instant rever
ence,
Deane to true young heuts than then
own pruse,
But left him leave to stummci, 'Is it
indeed?'
And after muttering 'The great Lancelot,'

At last he got his breath and answei'd,
‘One,
One have I seen—that other, our liege
lord,
The dead Pendragon, Britain's King of
kings,
Of whom the people talk mysteriously,
He will be there—then woe I stricken
blind
That minute, I might say that I had seen ’

So spake Lavaine, and when they
reach'd the lists
By Camelot in the meadow, let his eyes
Run tho' the peopled galleri which half
round
Lay like a rainbow fall'n upon the grass,
Until they found the clear faced King,
who sat
Robed in red sumite, easily to be known,
Since to his crown the golden dragon
clung,
And down his robe the dragon writhed
in gold,
And from the caiven work behnd him
crept
Two dragons gilded, sloping down to
strike
Aims for his chau, while all the rest of
them
Thro' knots and loops and folds immu
merible
Fled ever tho' the woodwork, till they
found
The new design wherem they lost them
selves,
Yet with ill ease, so tender was the work
And, in the costly canopy o'er him set,
Blazed the last diamond of the nameless
king

Then Lancelot answer'd young Lavaine
and sud,
‘Me you call great mine is the humer
scul,
The truer hunc but there is many ryouth
Now crescent, who will come to ill I am
And overcome it, and in me there dwells
No grievous, save it be some fu off touch
Of greatness to know well I am not great

There is the man ! And Lavaine griped
upon him
As on a thing miraculous, and anon
The trumpets blew, and then did either
side,
They that assail'd, and they that held the
lists,
Set lance in rest, strike spui, suddenly
move,
Meet in the midst, and there so furiously
Shock, that a man far oft might well
perceive,
If any man that day were left afield,
The hard earth shrike, and a low thunder
of arms
And Lancelot bode a little, till he saw
Which were the weaker, then he hul'd
into it
Against the stronger little need to speak
Of Lancelot in his glory ! King, duke,
earl,
Count, baron—whom he smote, he over
thiew

But in the field were Lancelot's kith
and kin,
Ranged with the Table Round that held
the lists,
Strong men, and wrathful that a stronger
knight
Should do and almost overdo the deeds
Of Lancelot, and one said to the other,
'Lo !'
What is he ? I do not mean the force
alone—
The grace and versatility of the man !
Is it not Lancelot ? ' When has Lance
lot worn
Favour of any lady in the lists ?
Not such his wont, as we, that know him,
know '
' How then ? who then ? ' a fury seized
them all,
A fiery family passion for the name
Of Lancelot, and a glory one with theirs
They couch'd their spears and prick'd their
steeds, and thus,
Their plumes driv'n backward by the wind
they made
In moving, all together down upon him

Bue, as a wild wave in the wide North sea,
Green glimmering toward the summit,
bears, with all
Its stormy crests that smoke against the
skies,
Down on a bark, and overbearis the bark,
And him that helms it, so they overboie
Sir Lancelot and his charger, and a spew
Down glancing lamed the charger, and a
spear
Pluck'd shairly his own cuirass, and the
head
Pierced tho' his side, and there srap't,
and remain'd

Then Sir Lavaine did well und woi
shipfully,
He bore a knight of old repute to the
earth,
And brought his hoise to Lancelot where
he lay
He up the side, sweating with agony, got,
But thought to do while he might yet
endure,
And being lustily holpen by the rest,
His puty,—tho' it seem'd half miricle
To those he fought with,—drive his kith
and kin,
And all the Table Round that held the
lists,
Back to the burner, then the trumpets
blew
Proclaiming his the prize, who wore the
sleeve
Of sculet, und the pearls, and all the
knights,
His party, cried ' Advance and take thy
prize
The diamond,' but he answer'd, ' Diamond
me
No diamonds ! for God's love, a little ur !
Prize me no prizes, for my prize is death !
Hence will I, and I charge you, follow
me not '

He spoke, and vanish'd suddenly from
the field
With young Lavaine into the poplar grove
There from his charger down he slid, and
sat,

Gasping to Sir Lavaine, ‘Draw the lance
head,’
‘Ah my sweet lord Sir Lancelot,’ said
Lavaine,
‘I dread me, if I draw it, you will die,’
But he, ‘I die already with it draw—
Draw,—and Lavaine diew, and Sir
Lancelot gave
A marvellous great shick and ghastly
groan,
And half his blood burst forth, and down
he sank
For the pure pain, and wholly swoon’d
away
Then came the hermit out and bue him
in,
There stanch’d his wound, and there, in
daily doubt
Whether to live or die, for many a week
Hid from the wide world’s rumour by the
grove
Of poplars with their noise of falling
showers,
And ever-tremulous aspen trees, he lay

But on that day when Lancelot fled the
lists,
His party, knights of utmost North and
West,
Lords of waste marches, kings of desolate
isles,
Came round their great Pendragon, saying
to him,
‘Lo, Sire, ou knight, thro’ whom we
won the day,
Hath gone soe wounded, and hath left
his prize
Untaken, crying that his prize is death
‘Heaven hinder,’ said the King, ‘that
such an one,
So great a knight as we have seen to-day—
He seem’d to me another Lancelot—
Yer, twenty times I thought him Lance-
lot—
He must not pass uncared for Where-
fore, rise,
O Gawain, and ride forth and find the
knight
Wounded and wearied needs must he be
near

I charge you that you get at once to horse
And, knights and kings, there breathes
not one of you
Will deem this prize of ours is rashly
given
His piowess was too wondrous We will
do him
No customary honour since the knight
Came not to us, of us to claim the prize,
Ourselves will send it after Rise and take
This diamond, and deliver it, and return,
And bring us where he is, and how he
fares,
And cease not from your quest until ye
find ’

So syring, from the cuven flower above,
To which it made a restless heart, he took,
And gave, the diamond then from where
he sat

At Arthur’s ight, with smiling face arose,
With smiling face and frowning heart, a
Prince

In the mid night and flourish of his May,
Gawain, sunamed The Courteous, fair
and strong,
And after Lancelot, Tristram, and
Geraint

And Gareth, a good knight, but theie-
withal

Sir Modred’s brother, and the child of Lot,
Not often loyal to his word, and now
Wioth that the King’s command to sally
forth

In quest of whom he knew not, made him
leave

The banquet, and concourse of knights
and kings

So all in wiath he got to hoise and
went,
While Arthur to the banquet, dark in
mood,
Past, thinking ‘Is it Lancelot who hath
come
Despite the wound he speake of, all for
gain
Of glory, and hath added wound to wound,
And iidd’n away to die?’ So fear’d the
King,

And, after two days' tariance there,
return'd
Then when he s̄w the Queen, embrac
ing ask'd,
'Love, are you yet so sick?' 'Nay,
lord,' she said
'And where is Lancelot?' Then the
Queen amazed,
'Was he not with you? won he not you
prize?'
'Nay, but one like him' 'Why that like
was he'
And when the King demanded how she
knew,
Said, 'Lord, no sooner had ye partal
from us,
Then Lancelot told me of a common
talk
That men went down before his speu at
a touch,
But knowing he was Lancelot, his great
name
Conquer'd, and therefore would he hide
his name
From all men, ev'n the King, and to this
end
Had made the pietext of a lundering
wound,
That he might joust unknown of ill, and
lurn
If his old prōcess were in rught decay'd,
And added, 'Our true Arthur, when he
leuns,
Will well allow my pietext, as for gain
Of purer glory'''

Then replied the King
'Fair loveher in our Lancelot had it been,
In lieu of idly dallyng with the trith,
To have trusted me as he hath trusted
thee
Surely has King and most familiu friend
Might well have kept his secret True,
indeed,
Albeit I know my knights fantastical,
So fine a fear in our large Lancelot
Must needs have moved my laughter
now remains
But little cause for laughter his own
km—

Ill news, my Queen, for all who love him,
this!
His lith and kin, not knowing, set upon
him,
So that he went soie wounded from the
field
Yet good news too for goodly hopes are
mine
That Lancelot is no more a lonely heart
He wro, against his wont, upon his helm
A sleeve of scarlet, broider'd with great
peuls,
Some gentle maiden's gift'

'Yea, lord,' she said,
'Thy hopes ne mine,' and saying that,
she choked,
And shrifly turnd' about to hide hei face,
Past to hei chamber, and there flung
herself
Down on the gient King's couch, and
writhed upon it,
And clenched her fingers till they bit the
palm,
And shrick'd out 'Trutor' to the un
hearing wall,
Then flish'd into wild tears, and rose
again,
And moved about hei palace, proud and
pale

Gawain the while thro' all the region
round
Rode with his diamond, weared of the
quest,
Touch'd at all points, except the poplu
glove,
And came at last, tho' late, to Astolat
Whom glittering in enunell'd arms the
mud
Glanced at, and cried, 'What news from
Camclot, lord?
What of the knight with the red sleeve?'
'He won'
'I knew it,' she said 'But pruted from
the jousts
Hurt in the side,' wherent she caught her
breath,
Thio' hei own side she felt the shaip
lance go,

Thereon she smote her hand wellnigh
she swoon'd
And, while he gazed wonderingly at her,
came
The Lord of Astolat out, to whom the
Prince
Reported who he was, and on what quest
Sent, that he bore the prize and could not
find
The victor, but had ridd'n a random
round
To seek him, and had wearied of the
search
To whom the Lord of Astolat, 'Bide with
us,'
And ride no more at random, noble
Prince!
Here was the knight, and here he left a
shield,
This will he send or come for further
more
Our son is with him, we shall hear anon,
Needs must we hear! To this the cour-
teous Prince
Accorded with his wonted courtesy,
Courtesy with a touch of trutor in it,
And stay'd, and cast his eyes on fair
Elaine
Where could be found face dauntier? then
her shape
From forehead down to foot, perfect—
again
From foot to forehead exquisitely turn'd
'Well—if I bide, lo! this wild flower for
me'
And oft they met among the guden yews,
And thre he set himself to ply upon her
With sallying wit, free flashes from
height
Above her, graces of the court, and songs,
Sighs, and slow smiles, and golden elo-
quence
And amorous adulation, till the mad
Rebell'd wainst it, saying to him, 'Prince,
O loyal nephew of our noble King,
Why ask you not to see the shield he left,
Whence you might learn his name? Why
slight your King,
And lose the quest he sent you on, and
prove

No surer than our falcon yesterday,
Who lost the hen we slipt her at, and
went
To all the winds?' 'Nay, by mine
head,' said he,
'I lose it, as we lose the lark in heaven,
O damsel, in the light of your blue eyes,
But an ye will it let me see the shield?'
And when the shield was brought, and
Gawain saw
Sir Lancelot's azure lions, crown'd with
gold,
Ramp in the field, he smote his thigh,
and mock'd
'Right was the King! our Lancelot!
that true man!'
'And right was I,' she answer'd merrily,
'I,
Who diem'd my knyght the greatest
knyght of all'
'And if I diem'd,' said Gawain, 'that
you love
This greatest knyght, you pardon! lo,
ye know it!
Speak therefore shall I waste myself in
vun?
Full simple was her answer, 'What know
I?
My brethen have been all my fellow
ship,
And I, when often they have talk'd of
love,
Wish'd it had been my mother, for they
talk'd,
Meseem'd, of what they knew not, so
myself—
I know not if I know what true love is,
But if I know, then, if I love not him,
I know there is none other I can love'
'Yea, by God's deth,' said he, 'ye love
him well,
But would not, knew ye what all othe's
know,
And whom he loves?' 'So be it,' cried
Elaine,
And lifted her fair face and moved wry
But he pursued her, calling, 'Stay a
little'
One golden minute's grace' he wore
your sleeve

Would he break faith with one I may not name?
 Must our true man change like a leaf at last?
 Nay—like enow why then, fair be it from me
 To cross our mighty Lancelot in his loves!
 And, damsel, for I deem you know full well
 Where your great knight is hidden, let me leave
 My quest with you, the diamond also here!
 For if you love, it will be sweet to give it,
 And if he love, it will be sweet to have it
 From you own hand, and whether he love or not,
 A diamond is a diamond Fare you well
 A thousand times!—a thousand times farewell!
 Yet, if he love, and his love hold, we two
 May meet at court hereafter there, I think,
 So ye will leain the courtesies of the court,
 We two shall know each other'

Then he gave,
 And slightly kiss'd the hand to which he gave,
 The diamond, and all wearied of the quest
 Leapt on his horse, and carolling as he went
 A true love ballad, lightly rode away

Thence to the court he past, there told the King
 What the King knew, 'Sir Lancelot is the knight'
 And added, 'Sire, my liege, so much I leant,
 But fail'd to find him, tho' I rode all round
 The region but I lighted on the maid
 Whose sleeve he wore, she loves him,
 and to her,
 Deeming our courtesy is the truest law,

I gave the diamond she will render it,
 For by mine head she knows his hiding-place'

The seldom flowing King flown'd,
 and replied,
 'Too courteous truly! ye shall go no more
 On quest of mine, seeing that ye forget
 Obedience is the courtesy due to kings'

He spake and paide Wioth, but all in twe,
 For twenty stokes of the blood, without a word,

Linger'd that other, staring after him,
 Then shook his hair, strode off, and buzz'd abroad
 About the maid of Astolat, and her love
 All ears were prick'd at once, all tongues were loosed

'The maid of Astolat loves Sir Lancelot,
 Sir Lancelot loves the maid of Astolat'
 Some reid the King's face, some the Queen's, and all
 Had muvel whit the maid might be, but most
 Piedoom'd her as unworthy One old dame

Came suddenly on the Queen with the shup news
 She, that had heard the noise of it before,
 But sorrowing Lancelot should have stoop'd so low,
 Mair'd her friend's aim with pale tranquillity

So ran the tale like fire about the court,
 Fire in dry stubble a nine days' wonder flued

Till ev'n the knights at banquet twice or thrice
 Forgot to drink to Lancelot and the Queen,
 And pledging Lancelot and the lily maid
 Smiled at each other, while the Queen,
 who sat
 With lips severely placid, felt the knot
 Climb in her throat, and with her feet unseen

Crush'd the wild passion out against the floor
Beneath the banquet, where the meats became
As wormwood, and she hated all who pledged

But far away the maid in Astolat,
Her guiltless rival, she that ever kept
The one day-seen Sir Lancelot in her heart,
Crept to her father, while he mused alone,
Sat on his knee, stroked his gray face
and said,
'Father, you call me wilful, and the fault
Is yours who let me have my will, and now,
Sweet father, will you let me lose my wits?'
'Nay,' said he, 'surely' 'Wherefore,
let me hence,'
She answer'd, 'and find out our dear Lavaine'
'Ye will not lose your wits for dear Lavaine
Bide,' answer'd he 'we needs must hear anon
Of him, and of that other' 'Ay,' she said,
'And of that other, for I needs must hence
And find that other, whereso'er he be,
And with mine own hand give his diamond to him,
Lest I be found as faithless in the quest
As yon proud Prince who left the quest to me
Sweet father, I behold him in my dreams
Gaunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
Death pale, for lack of gentle maiden's aid
The gentler-born the maiden, the more bound,
My father, to be sweet and serviceable
To noble knights in sickness, as ye know
When these have worn their tokens let me hence
I pray you' Then her father nodding said,
'Ay, ay, the diamond wit ye well, my child,

Right fain were I to learn this knight were whole,
Being our greatest yea, and you must give it—
And sure I think this fruit is hung too high
For any mouth to gape for save a queen's—
Nay, I mean nothing so then, get you gone,
Being so very wilful you must go'

Lightly, her suit allow'd, she shipt away,
And while she made her ready for her ride,
Her father's latest word humm'd in her ear,
'Being so very wilful you must go,'
And changed itself and echo'd in her heart,
'Being so very wilful you must die'
But she was happy enough and shook it off,
As we shake off the bee that buzzes at us,
And in her heart she answer'd it and said,
'What matter, so I help him back to life?'
Then far away with good Sir Torre for guide
Rode o'er the long backs of the bushless downs
To Camelot, and before the city gates
Came on her brother with a happy face
Making a roan horse caper and cuvet
For pleasure all about a field of flowers
Whom when she saw, 'Lavaine,' she cried, 'Lavaine,
How fares my lord Sir Lancelot?' He amazed,
'Torre and Elaine! why here? Sir Lancelot'
How know ye my lord's name is Lance lot?
But when the maid had told him all her tale,
Then twin'd Sir Torre, and being in his moods
Left them, and under the strange-statued gate,
Where Arthur's wais were render'd mystically,
Past up the still rich city to his kin,

His own fair blood, which dwelt at
Camelot,
And her, Lavine across the poplar grove
Led to the caves there first she saw the
casque
Of Lancelot on the wall her scutlet
sleeve,
Tho' carv'd and cut, and half the pearls
awry,
Stream'd from it still, and in her heart
she laugh'd,
Because he had not loosed it from his
helm,
But meant once more perchance to tour
ney in it
And when they gain'd the cell wherein
he slept,
His battle-writhen arms and mighty hands
Lay naked on the wolfskin, and a dream
Of dragging down his enemy made them
move
Then she that saw him lying unsleek,
unshorn,
Griunt as it were the skeleton of himself,
Utter'd a little tender dolorous cry
The sound not wonted in a place so still
Woke the sick knight, and while he roll'd
his eyes
Yet blank from sleep, she started to him,
staying,
'Your place the diamond sent you by the
King'
His eyes glisten'd she fancied 'Is it for
me?'
And when the maid had told him all the
tale
Of King and Prince, the diamond sent,
the quest
Assign'd to her not worthy of it, she knelt
Full lowly by the corneis of his bed,
And laid the diamond in his open hand
Her face was near, and as we kiss the
child
That does the task assign'd, he kiss'd her
face
At once she slipt like water to the floor
'Alas,' he said, 'your ride hath wearied
you
Rest must you have' 'No rest for me,'
she said,

'Nay, for new you, fair lord, I am at rest'
Whit might she mean by that? his huge
black eyes,
Yet larger thro' his leanness, dwelt upon
her,
Till all her heart's sad secret blazed itself
In the heart's colours on her simple face
And Lancelot look'd and was perplex'd in
mind,
And being weak in body said no more,
But did not love the colour, woman's
love,
Sive one, he not regarded, and so turn'd
Sighing, and sign'd a sleep until he slept

Then rose Elaine and glided thro' the
fields,
And past beneath the weirdly sculptured
gates
Far up the dim rich city to her kin,
There bore the night but woke with
dawn, and past
Down thro' the dim rich city to the fields,
Thence to the cave so dry by dry she
past
In either twilight ghost like to and fro
Gliding, and every dry she tended him,
And likewise many a night and Lancelot
Would, tho' he call'd his wound a little
hurt
Whereof he should be quickly whole, at
times
Bran furious in his heat and agony,
seem
Uncourteous, even he but the meek
maid
Sweetly forbore him ever, being to him
Meeker than any child to a rough nurse,
Milder than any mother to a sick child,
And never woman yet, since man's first
fall,
Did kindly unto man, but her deep love
Upbore her, till the hermit, skill'd in all
The simples and the science of that time,
Told him that her fine care had saved his
life
And the sick man forgot her simple blush,
Would call her friend and sister, sweet
Elaine,
Would listen for her coming and neglect

Her parting step, and held her tenderly,
And loved her with all love except the
love

Of man and woman when they love their
best,
Closest and sweetest, and had died the
death

In any knightly fashion for her sake
And peradventure had he seen her first
She might have made this and that other
world

Another world for the sick man, but now
The shackles of an old love straitend
him,

His honour rooted in dishonour stood,
And faith unfaithful kept him falsely true

Yet the great knight in his mud sickness made

Full many a holy vow and pure resolve
These, as but born of sickness, could not
live

For when the blood ran lustier in him
again,

Full often the bright image of one face,
Making a treacherous quiet in his heart,
Dispersed his resolution like a cloud
Then if the maiden, while that ghostly
grace

Bent'd on his fancy, spoke, he answer'd
not,

Or short and coldly, and she knew right
well

What the rough sickness meant, but what
this meant

She knew not, and the sorrow dimm'd
her sight,

And drove her eye her time across the
fields

Fu into the rich city, where alone
She murmur'd, 'Vain, in vain it cannot
be

He will not love me how then? must
I die?

Then as a little helpless innocent bird,
That has but one plain passage of few
notes,

Will sing the simple passage o'er and o'er
For all an April morning, till the ear
Wearies to hear it, so the simple maid

Went half the night repeating, 'Must I
die?'

And now to night she turn'd, and now to
left,

And found no ease in turning or in rest,
And 'Ilim or death,' she mutter'd,
'death or him,'

Again and like a bairn, 'Him or death'

But when Sir Lancelot's deadly hurt
was whole,

To Astolat returning rode the three
There morn by morn, arraying her sweet
self

In that wherewithal she deem'd she look'd
her best,

She came before Sir Lancelot, for she
thought

'If I be loved, these are my festal robes,
If not, the victim's flowers before he fall'
And Lancelot ever priest upon the mud
That she should ask some goodly gift of
him

For her own self or heirs, 'and do not
shun

To speak the wish most new to your true
heut,

Such service have done me, that I make
My will of yours, and Pance and Lord
am I

In mine own land, and what I will I can'
I hen like a ghost she lifted up her face,
But like a ghost without the power to
speak

And Lancelot saw that she withheld her
wish,

And bode among them yet a little space
Till he should levin it, and one morn it
chanced

He found her in among the guinden yews,
And said, 'Delay no longer, speak you
wish,

Seeng I go to day' then out she brake
'Going? and we shall never see you more
And I must die for wint of one bold word,
'Speak that I live to hear,' he said, 'is
yours,'

Then suddenly and passionately she spoke
'I have gone mad I love you let me
die'

'Ah, sister,' answer'd Lancelot, 'what is this?'
 And innocently extending her white arms,
 'Your love,' she said, 'your love—to be
 your wife'
 And Lancelot answer'd, 'Had I chosen
 to wed,
 I had been wedded earher, sweet Elaine
 But now there never will be wife of mine'
 'No, no,' she cried, 'I care not to be
 wife,
 But to be with you still, to see you face,
 To serve you, and to follow you thro' the
 world'
 And Lancelot answer'd, 'Nay, the world,
 the world,
 All ear and eye, with such a stupid heart
 To interpret ear and eye, and such a
 tongue
 To blare its own interpretation—nay,
 Full ill then should I quit your brother's
 love,
 And your good father's kindness' And
 she said,
 'Not to be with you, not to see your face—
 Alas for me then, my good days are done'
 'Nay, noble maid,' he answer'd, 'ten
 times nay'
 This is not love but love's first flush in
 youth,
 Most common yea, I know it of mine
 own self
 And you yourself will smile at your own
 self
 Hereafter, when you yield your flower of
 life
 To one more fitly yours, not thrice your
 age
 And then will I, for true you are and
 sweet
 Beyond mine old belief in womanhood,
 More specially should you good knight
 be poor,
 Endow you with broad land and territory
 Even to the half my realm beyond the
 seas,
 So that would make you happy further
 more,
 Ev'n to the death, as tho' ye were my
 blood,

In all your quarrels will I be your knight
 This will I do, dear damsels, for your sake,
 And more than this I cannot'

While he spoke
 She neither blush'd nor shook, but
 deathly pale
 Stood grasping what was nearest, then
 replied
 'Of all this will I nothing,' and so fell,
 And thus they bore her swooning to her
 tower

Then spake, to whom thro' those black
 walls of yew
 Their talk had pierced, her father 'Ay,
 a flush,
 I fear me, that will strike my blossom dead
 Too courteous are ye, fair Lord Lancelot
 I pray you, use some rough discourtesy
 To blunt or bick her passion'

Lancelot said,
 'That were against me what I can I
 will,'
 And there that day remain'd, and toward
 even
 Sent for his shield full meekly rose the
 mud,
 Stript off the case, and gave the naked
 shield,
 Then, when she heard his horse upon the
 stones,
 Unclaspings flung the casement back, and
 look'd
 Down on his helm, from which her sleeve
 had gone
 And Lancelot knew the little clinking
 sound,
 And she by tact of love was well aware
 That Lancelot knew that she was looking
 at him
 And yet he glanced not up, nor waved
 his hand,
 Nor bid farewell, but sadly rode away
 This was the one discourtesy that he used

So in her tower alone the maiden sat
 His very shield was gone, only the case,
 Her own poor work, her empty labour,
 left

But still she heard him, still his picture
form'd

And grew between her and the pictured
wall

Then came her father, saying in low tones,
'Have comfort,' whom she greeted
quietly

Then came her brethren saying, 'Peace
to thee,

Sweet sister,' whom she answer'd with all
calm

But when they left her to herself again,
Death, like a friend's voice from a distant
field

Approaching thro' the darkness, call'd,
the owls

Wailing had power upon her, and she
mixt

Her fancies with the sallow-tinted glooms
Of evening, and the moanings of the wind

And in those days she made a little
song,

And call'd her song 'The Song of Love
and Death,'

And sang it sweetly could she make
and sing

'Sweet is true love tho' given in vain,
in vain,

And sweet is death who puts an end to
pain

I know not which is sweeter, no, not I

'Love, art thou sweet? then bitter
death must be

Love, thou art bitter, sweet is death to
me

O Love, if death be sweeter, let me die

'Sweet love, that seems not made to
fade away,

Sweet death, that seems to make us love
less clay,

I know not which is sweeter, no, not I

'I fain would follow love, if that could
be,

I needs must follow death, who calls for
me,

Call and I follow, I follow! let me die'

High with the last line scaled her voice,
and this,

All in a fiery dawning wild with wind
That shook her tower, the brothers heard,
and thought

With shuddering, 'Hark the Phantom of
the house

That ever shucks before a death,' and
call'd

The father, and all three in hurry and fear
Ran to her, and lo! the blood-red light
of dawn

Flared on her face, she shrilling, 'Let
me die!'

As when we dwell upon a word we
know,

Repeating, till the word we know so well
Becomes a wonder, and we know not why,
So dwelt the father on her face, and
thought

'Is this Elaine?' till back the maiden fell,
Then gave a languid hand to each, and
lay,

Speaking a still good Morrow with her
eyes

At last she said, 'Sweet brothers, yester
night

I seem'd a curious little mud again,
As happy as when we dwelt among the
woods,

And when ye used to take me with the
flood

Up the great river in the boatman's boat
Only ye would not pass beyond the cape

That has the poplar on it there ye fixt
Your limit, oft returning with the tide

And yet I cried because ye would not pass
Beyond it, and far up the shining flood
Until we found the palace of the King
And yet ye would not, but this night I
dream'd

That I was all alone upon the flood,
And then I said, "Now shall I have my
will"

And there I woke, but still the wish
remain'd

So let me hence that I may pass at last
Beyond the poplar and far up the flood,
Until I find the palace of the King

There will I enter in among them all,
And no man there will dare to mock at
me,
But there the fine Gawain will wonder at
me,
And there the great Sir Lancelot muse
at me,
Gawain, who bad a thousand farewells to
me,
Lancelot, who coldly went, nor bad me
one
And there the King will know me and
my love,
And there the Queen herself will pity me,
And all the gentle court will welcome me,
And after my long voyage I shall rest'

'Peace,' said her father, 'O my child,
ye seem
Light headed, for what force is yours to
go
So far, being sick? and wherefore would
ye look
On this proud fellow again, who scorns
us all?'

Then the rough Torre began to heave
and move,
And blustred into stormy sobs and say,
'I never loved him in I met with
him,
I care not howsoever great he be,
Then will I strike at him and strike him
down,
Give me good fortune, I will strike him
dead,
For this discomfort he hath done the
house'

To whom the gentle sister made reply,
'Fret not yourself, dear brother, nor be
wooth,
Seeing it is no more Sir Lancelot's fault
Not to love me, than it is mine to love
Him of all men who seems to me the
highest'

'Highest?' the father answer'd, echoing
'highest?'
(He meant to break the passion in her)
'nay,

Daughter, I know not what you call the
highest,
But this I know, for all the people know it,
He loves the Queen, and in an open shame
And she returns his love in open shame,
If this be high, what is it to be low?'

Then spake the lily maid of Astolat
'Sweet father, all too fount and sick am I
For angel these are slanders never yet
Was noble man but made ignoble talk.
He makes no friend who never made a foe
But now it is my glory to have loved
One peerless, without stain so let me
pass,
My father, howsoe'er I seem to you,
Not all unhappy, having loved God's best
And greatest, tho' my love had no return
Yet, seeing you desire your child to live,
Thinks, but you work against your own
desire,
For if I could believe the things you say
I should but die the sooner, wherefore
cease,
Sweet father, and bid call the ghostly man
Hither, and let me shrive me clean, and
die'

So when the ghostly man had come and
gone,
She with a face bright as the sun forgiven,
Brought I wrene to write as she desired
A letter, word for word, and when he
ask'd
'Is it for Lancelot, is it for my deu lord?
Then will I bear it gladly,' she replied,
'For Lancelot and the Queen and all the
world,
But I myself must bear it.' Then he wrote
The letter she devised, which being writ
And folded, 'O sweet father, tender and
true,
Deny me not,' she said—'ye never yet
Denied my fancies—this, however strange,
My latest lay the letter in my hand
A little ere I die, and close the hand
Upon it, I shall guard it even in death
And when the heat is gone from out my
heat,
Then take the little bed on which I died

For Lancelot's love, and deck it like the Queen's
For richness, and me also like the Queen
In all I have of rich, and lay me on it
And let there be prepared a chariot-bier
To take me to the river, and a barge
Be ready on the river, clothed in black
I go in state to court, to meet the Queen
There surely I shall speak for mine own self,

And none of you can speak for me so well
And therefore let our dumb old man alone
Go with me, he can steer and row, and he
Will guide me to that palace, to the doors'

She ceased her father promised,
wherupon
She grew so cheerful that they deem'd her death
Was rather in the fantasy than the blood
But ten slow mornings past, and on the eleventh
Her father had the letter in her hand,
And closed the hand upon it, and she died
So that day there was dole in Astolat

But when the next sun broke from underground,
Then, those two brethren slowly with bent brows
Accompanying, the sad chariot bier
Past like a shadow thro' the field, that shone
Full-summer, to that stream whereon the barge,
Pall'd all its length in blackest summe, lay
Thereat the long creature of the house,
Loyal, the dumb old servitor, on deck,
Winking his eyes, and twisted all his face
So those two brethren from the chariot took
And on the black decks had her in her bed,
Set in her hand a lily, o'er her hung
The silken case with bruted blazonings,
And kiss'd her quict brows, and saying to her

'Sister, farewell for ever,' and again
'Farewell, sweet sister,' putted all in tears
Then rose the dumb old servitor, and the dead,

Oar'd by the dumb, went upward with the flood—
In her right hand the lily, in her left
The letter—all her bright hair streaming down—
And all the coverlid was cloth of gold
Drawn to her waist, and she herself in white
All but her face, and that clear featured face
Was lovely, for she did not seem as dead,
But fast asleep, and lay as tho' she smiled

That day Sir Lancelot at the palace craved
Audience of Guinevere, to give at last
The price of half a realm, his costly gift,
Had won and hardly won with bruise and blow,
With deaths of others, and almost his own,
The nine-years fought-for diamonds for he saw
One of her house, and sent him to the Queen
Bearing his wish, whereto the Queen agreed
With such and so unmoved a majesty
She might have seem'd her statue, but that he,
Low drooping till he wellnigh kiss'd her feet
For loyal awe, sivv with a sidelong eye
The shadow of some piece of pointed lace,
In the Queen's shadow, vibrante on the walls,
And parted, laughing in his courtly heart

All in an oriel on the summer side,
Vine clad, of Arthur's palace toward the stream,
They met, and Lancelot kneeling utter'd,
‘Queen,
Lady, my liege, in whom I have my joy,
Take, what I had not won except for you,
These jewels, and make me happy, making them
An amulet for the roundest arm on earth,
Or necklace for a neck to which the swan's

Is tawnier than her cygnet's these are words

Your beauty is your beauty, and I sin In speaking, yet O grant my woiship of it Words, as we grant gief tears Such sin in words

Perchance, we both can pardon but, my Queen,

I hear of rumours flying tho' your court Our bond, is not the bond of man and wife,

Should have in it an absoluter trust To make up that defec let rumours be When did not rumours fly? these, as I trust

That you trust me in you own nobleness, I may not well believe that you believe'

While thus he spoke, half turn'd awry, the Queen

Biale from the vast ouiel embowering vine Leaf after leaf, and tore, and cast them off,

Till all the place whereon she stood was green,

Then, when he ceased, in one cold passive hand

Received at once and hid aside the gems There on a table neu her, and replied

'It may be, I am queker of belief Than you believe me, Lancloet of the Lake

Oui bond is not the bond of man and wife This good is in it, whatsoe'er of ill, It can be broken easie I for you This many a year have done despite and wronng

To one whom ever in my heart of hearts I did acknowledge nobler What aic these?

Diamonds for me! they had been thince their worth

Being your gift, had you not lost your own

To loyal hearts the value of all gifts Must vary as the giver's Not for me! For her! for your new fancy Only this Grant me, I pray you have your joys apart

I doubt not that however changed, you keep

So much of what is graceful and myself Would shun to break those bounds of courtesy

In which as Aithur's Queen I move and rule

So cannot speak my mind An end to this'

A strange one! yet I take it with Amen So pray you, add my diamonds to her pearls,

Deck her with these, tell her, she shines me down

An armlet for an arm to which the Queen's

Is haggud, or a necklace for a neck O is much furter—as a faith once fur Was richei than these diamonds—heirs not mine—

Nay, by the mother of our Lord himself, Oi heirs oí mine, mine now to work my will—

She shall not have them'

Saying which she seized, And, tho' the censem standing wide for heat, Flung them, and down they flas'h'd, and smote the strem

Then from the smitten surface flas'h'd, is it were,

Diamonds to meet them, and they past away

Then while Sir Lancloet leant, in half disdain

At love, life, all things, on the window ledge,

Close underneath his eyes, and right across

Where these had fallen, slowly past the barge

Whereon the lily maid of Astolat Lay smiling, like a star in blackest night

But the wild Queen, who saw not, burst awry

To weep and wail in secret, and the baige,

On to the palace doorway sliding, paused

There two stood aim'd, and kept the
door, to whom,
All up the marble stam, tier over tier,
Were added mouths that gaped, and eyes
that ask'd

' What is it ?' but that oarsman's haggard
face,

As hard and still as is the face that men
Shape to their fancy's eye from broken
rocks

On some cliff-side, appall'd them, and
they said,

' He is enchanted, cannot speak—and she,
Look how she sleeps—the Fany Queen,
so fu !'

Yet, but how pale ! what are they ? flesh
and blood ?

Oi come to take the King to Fairyland ?
For some do hold ou Arthur cannot die,
But that he passes into Fairyland '

While thus they babbled of the King,
the King

Came girl with knights then turn'd the
tongueless man

From the half-face to the full eye, and
rose

And pointed to the dumsel, and the doors
So Arthur bad the meek Sir Percivale
And pure Sir Galahad to uplift the maid ,
And reuently they boie her into hall
Then came the fine Gawain and wonder'd
at her,

And Lancloet later came and mused at
her,

And last the Queen herself, and pitied
her

But Arthur spied the latter in her hand,
Stoopt, took, brake seal, and read it ,
this was all

' Most noble lord, Sir Lancelot of the
Lake,

I, sometime call'd the maid of Astolat,
Come, for you left me taking no farewell,
Hither, to take my last farewell of you
I loved you, and my love had no return,
And therefore my true love has been my
death

And therefore to our Lady Guinevere,

And to all other ladies, I make moan
Pray for my soul, and yield me burial
Pray for my soul thou too, Sir Lancelot,
As thou art a knight peerless '

Thus he read ,
And ever in the reading, lords and dames
Wept, looking often from his face who
read
To heirs which lay so silent, and at times,
So touch'd were they, half thinking that
her lips,
Who had devised the letter, moved again

Then freely spoke Sir Lancelot to them
all

' My lord liege Arthur, and all ye that
hear,
Know that for this most gentle maiden's
death
Rught heavy am I , for good she was and
true,

But loved me with a love beyond all love
In women, whomsoever I have known
Yet to be loved makes not to love again ,
Not at my yeus, however it hold in youth
I swear by truth and knighthood that I
gave

No cause, not willingly, for such a love
To this I call my friends in testimony,
Her brethien, and her fither, who himself
Besought me to be plain and blunt, and
use,

To break her passion, some discourtesy
Against my nature what I could, I did
I left hei and I bad hei no farewell ,
Tho', had I dreamt the dumsel would
have died,

I might have put my wits to some rough
use,
And help'd her from herself '

Then sud the Queen
(Sea was hei wrath, yet working after
storm)

' Ye might at least have done her so
much gracie,
Fur lord, is would have help'd her from
hei death '

He rused his head, their eyes met and
heis full,

He adding,

‘ Queen, she would not be content
Save that I wedded her, which could not
be

Then might she follow me thro’ the world,
she ask’d,
It could not be I told her that her love
Was but the flash of youth, would daiken
down
To rise hereafter in a stiller flame
Toward one more worthy of her—then
would I,

More specially were he, she wedded, poor,
Estate them with large land and territory
In mine own realm beyond the narrow
seas,
To keep them in all joyance more than
this
I could not, this she would not, and she
died’

He pausing, Arthur answer’d, ‘ O my
knight,

It will be to thy worship, as my knight,
And mine, is head of all our Table Round,
To see that she be buried worshipfully’

So toward that shrine which then in
all the realm
Was richest, Arthur leading, slowly went
The marshall’d Order of their Table
Round,
And Lancelot sad beyond his wont, to see
The maiden buried, not as one unknown,
Nor meanly, but with gorgeous obsequies,
And mass, and rolling music, like a queen
And when the knights had laid her comely
head

Low in the dust of half-forgotten kings,
Then Arthur spake among them, ‘ Let
her tomb

Be costly, and her image thereupon,
And let the shield of Lancelot at her feet
Be caiven, and her lily in her hand
And let the story of her dolorous voyage
For all true hearts be blazon’d on her tomb
In letters gold and azure!’ which was
wrought

Thereafter, but when now the lords and
dames

And people, from the high door streaming,
broke

Disorderly, as homeward each, the Queen,
Who mark’d Sir Lancelot where he moved

apart,
Drew near, and sigh’d in passing,
‘ Lancelot,
Forgive me, mine was jealousy in love’
He answer’d with his eyes upon the ground,
‘ That is love’s curse, pass on, my Queen,
forgiven’

But Arthur, who beheld his cloudy brows,
Approach’d him, and with full affection
said,

‘ Lancelot, my Lancelot, thou in whom
I live

Most joy and most reliance, for I know
What thou hast been in battle by my side,
And many a time have watch’d thee at
the tilt

Strike down the lusty and long practised
knight,

And let the younger and unskill’d go by
To win his honour and to make his name,
And loved thy courtesies and thee, a man
Made to be loved, but now I would to
God,

Seeing the homeless trouble in thine eyes,
Thou couldst have loved this maid’n,
shap’d, it seems,

By God for thee alone, and from her face,
If one may judge the living by the dead,
Delicately pure and marvellously fair,
Who might have brought thee, now a
lonely man

Wiseless and heirless, noble issue, sons
Born to the glory of thy name and fame,
My knight, the great Sir Lancelot of the
Lake’

Then answer’d Lancelot, ‘ Fair she was,
my King,

Pure, as you ever wish your knights to be
To doubt her fairness were to want an eye,
To doubt her puencss were to want a
heart—

Yea, to be loved, if wht is worthy love
Could bind him, but free love will not be
bound’

'Free love, so bound, were freeest,' said
the King
'Let love be free, free love is for the
best
And, after heaven, on our dull side of
death,
What should be best, if not so pure a love
Clothed in so pure a loveliness? yet thee
She fain'd to bind, tho' being, as I think,
Unbound as yet, and gentle, as I know'

 And Lancelot answer'd nothing, but
he went,
And at the inrunning of a little brook
Sat by the river in a cove, and wist'd
The high reed wive, and lifted up his eyes
And saw the barge that brought her
moving down,
Fair off, a blot upon the stream, and said
Low in himself, 'Ah simple heart and
sweet,
Ye loved me, damsel, surely with a love
Fair tenderer than my Queen's. Pray for
thy soul?'
 Ay, that will I. Farewell too—now at
last—
 Farewell, fair lily! "Jealousy in love?"
Not rather dead love's hush hen, jealous
pride?
 Queen, if I grant the jealousy is of love,
May not your crescent fear for name and
fame?
 Speak, as it waxes, of a love that wanes?
Why did the King dwell on my name to
me?
 Mine own name shames me, seeming a
reproach,
 Iuncelot, whom the Lady of the Lake
Caught from his mother's arms—the
wondrous one
 Who passes thro' the vision of the night—
She chanted snatches of mysterious hymns
Hidden on the winding water, eve and
morn
 She kiss'd me saying, "Thou art fair,
my child,
As a king's son," and often in her arms
She bare me, pacing on the dusky mere
Would she had drown'd me in it, where'er
it be!

For what am I? what profits me my name
Of greatest knight? I fought for it, and
have it
Pleasure to have it, none, to lose it, pain,
Now grown a paif of me but what use in
it?
 To make men woise by making my sin
known?
 O! sin seem less, the sinner seeming great?
 Alas for Arthur's greatest knight, a man
Not after Aithur's heart! I needs must
break
 These bonds that so desame me not
without
 She wills it would I, if she will'd it? nay,
Who knows? but if I would not, then
my God,
 I pray him, send a sudden Angel down
To seize me by the hair and bear me fair,
And fling me deep in that forgotten
mere,
 Among the tumbled fragments of the
hills'

 So grown'd Sir Lancelot in remoifful
pun,
 Not knowing he should die a holy man

 THE HOLY GRAIL
 FROM noiseful aims, and acts of prowess
done
 In tournament or tilt, Sir Percivale,
 Whom Arthur and his knighthood call'd
 The Pue,
 Had pass'd into the silent life of priyei,
 Priuse, fast, and ulms, and leaving for
 the cowl
 The helmet in an abbey far away
 From Camelot, there, and not long after,
 died

 And one, a fellow monk among the rest,
 Ambrosius, loved him much beyond the
 rest,
 And honour'd him, and wrought into his
 heart
 A way by love that waken'd love within,
 To answer that which came and as they
 sat

Beneath a wold old yew tree, darkening
half

The cloisteis, on a gustful Apil morn
That puff'd the swaying branches into
smoke

Above them, ere the summer when he
died,

The monk Ambrosius question'd Per
civale

'O brother, I have seen this yew tree
smoke,

Spung after spring, for half a hundred
years

For never have I known the wold with
out,

Nor ever stray'd beyond the pile but
thee,

When first thou camest—such a courtesy
Spake tho' the limbs and in the voice—

I knew

For one of those who eat in Arthur's hall,
For good ye are and bad, and like to coins,
Some true, some light, but every one of you
Stamp'd with the image of the King, and
now

Tell me, wht dbove thee from the Table
Round,

My brother? was it earthly passion ciost?

'Nay,' said the knight, 'for no such
passion mine

But the sweet vision of the Hloly Grail
Drove me from all vainglouies, rivalties,
And earthly heats that spring and spakle
out

Among us in the jousts, while women
watch

Who wins, who falls, and waste the
spiritual strength

Within us, better ofier'd up to Heaven'

To whom the monk 'The Holy
Grail!—I trust

We are green in Heaven's eyes, but here
too much

We moulder—as to things without I
mean—

Yet one of your own knights, a guest of
ours,

Told us of this in our refectory,

But spake with such a sadness and so low
We heard not half of what he said What
is it?

The phantom of a cup that comes and
goes?

'Nay, monk! what phantom?' answer'd
Percivale

'The cup, the cup itself, from which our
Lord

Diank at the last sad supper with his
own

This, from the blessed land of Aromat—
After the dy of daikness, when the dead
Went wandeirg o'er Moriah—the good
saint

Aimathæan Joseph, journeying brought
To Glastonbuyl, where the winter thorn
Blossoms at Christmas, mindful of our
Lord

And there awhile it bode, and if a man
Could touch or see it, he was heald' at
once,

By futh, of ill his ills But then the times
Grew to such evil that the holy cup
Was caught away to Heaven, and dis
appear'd'

To whom the monk 'From ou old
books I know

That Joseph came of old to Glastonbury,
And therre the heathen Prince, Arviragus,
Gave him an isle of marsh whereon to
build,

And therre he built with wattles from the
marsh

A little lonely church in days of yore,
For so they say, these books of ours, but
seem

Mute of this miracle, far as I have read
But who fist saw the holy thing to day?

'A woman,' answer'd Percivale, 'a
nun,

And one no further off in blood from me
Than sister, and if ever holy maid
With knees of adoration wore the stone,
A holy maid, tho' never maiden glow'd,
But that was in hei earlier maidenhood,
With such a fervent flame of humin
love,

Which being rudely blunted, glanced and shot
Only to holy things, to prayer and praise
She gave herself, to fast and alms And yet,
Nun as she was, the scandal of the Court,
Sin against Arthur and the Table Round,
And the strange sound of an adulterous race,
Across the iron grating of her cell
Bent, and she pray'd and fasted all the more

 ‘ And he to whom she told her sins, or what
Her all but utter whiteness held for sin,
A man wellnigh a hundred winters old,
Spake often with her of the Holy Grail,
A legend handed down thro' five or six,
And each of these a hundred winters old,
From our Lord's time And when King Arthur made
His Table Round, and all men's hearts became
Clean for a season, surely he had thought
That now the Holy Grail would come again,
But sin broke out Ah, Christ, that it would come,
And heel the world of all their wickedness!
“ O Father ! ” ask'd the maiden, “ might it come
To me by prayer and fasting ? ” “ Nay, ” said he,
“ I know not, for thy heart is pure as snow ”
And so she pray'd and fasted, till the sun shone, and the wind blew, thro' her, and I thought
She might have risen and floated when I saw her

‘ For on a day she sent to speak with me
And when she came to speak, behold her eyes
Beyond my knowing of them, beautiful,
Beyond all knowing of them, wonderful,
Beautiful in the light of holiness
And “ O my brother Percivale, ” she said,

“ Sweet brother, I have seen the Holy Grail
For, waked at dead of night, I heard a sound
As of a silver horn from o'er the hills Blown, and I thought, ‘ It is not Arthur's use
To hunt by moonlight, ’ and the slender sound
As from a distance beyond distance grew Coming upon me—O never harp nor horn, Nor aught we blow with breath, or touch with hand,
Was like that music as it came, and then Stream'd thro' my cell a cold and silver beam,
And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail,
Rose red with beatings in it, as if alive, Till all the white walls of my cell were dyed
With rosy colours leaping on the wall, And then the music faded, and the Grail Past, and the beam decay'd, and from the walls
The rosy quiverings died into the night So now the Holy Thing is here again Among us, brother, fast thou too and pray,
And tell thy brother knights to fast and pray,
That so perchance the vision may be seen By thee and those, and all the world be heal'd ”

 ‘ Then leaving the pale nun, I spake of this
To all men, and myself fasted and pray'd
Always, and many among us many a week Fasted and pray'd even to the uttermost, Expectant of the wonder that would be

 ‘ And one there was among us, ever moved
Among us in white raimow, Galahad
“ God make thee good as thou art beautiful ”
Said Arthur, when he dubb'd him knight, and none,

In so young youth, was ever made a knight

Till Galahad, and this Galahad, when he heard

My sister's vision, fill'd me with amaze,
His eyes became so like her own, they seem'd

Heir, and himself her brother more than I

'Sister or brother none had he, but some

Call'd him a son of Lancelot, and some said

Begotten by enchantment—chatterings they,

Like buds of passage piping up and down,
That gape for flies—we know not whence they come,

For when was Lancelot wunderingly lewd?

'But she, the wan sweet maiden, shone away

Clean from her forehead all that wealth of hair

Which made a silken mat work for her feet,

And out of this she plaited broid and long
A strong sword-belt, and wove with silver thund

And crimson in the belt a strange device,
A crimson grail within a silver beam,
And saw the bright boy-knight, and bound it on him,

Saying, "My knight, my love, my knight of heaven,

O thou, my love, whose love is one with mine,

I, maiden, round thee, maiden, bind my belt

Go forth, for thou shalt see what I have seen,

And break this' all, till one will crown thee king

Far in the spiritual city" and as she spake

She sent the deathless passion in her eyes
Thro' him, and made him hers, and bid her mind

On him, and he believed in her belief

'Then came a year of miracle O brother,

In our great hall there stood a vacant chair,

Fashion'd by Merlin ere he past away,
And carven with strange figures, and in and out

The figures, like a serpent, ran a scroll
Of letters in a tongue no man could read
And Merlin call'd it "The Siege perilous,"

Perilous for good and ill, "for there," he said,

"No man could sit but he should lose himself"

And once by misadventure Merlin sat
In his own chair, and so was lost, but he, Galahad, when he heard of Merlin's doom,
Cried, "If I lose myself, I save myself!"

'Then on a summer night it came to pass,

While the great banquet lay along the hall,

That Galahad would sit down in Merlin's chair

'And all at once, as there we sit, we heard

A crackling and a ringing of the roofs,
And rending, and a blast, and overheard thunder,
And in the thunder was a cry
And in the blast there smote along the hall
A beam of light seven times more clear
than day

And down the long beam stole the Holy Grail

All over cover'd with a luminous cloud,
And none might see who bare it, and it past

But every knight beheld his fellow's face
As in a glory, and all the knights arose,
And staring each at other like dumb men
Stood, till I found a voice and swore a vow

'I swore a vow before them all, that I,
Because I had not seen the Grail, would ride

A twelvemonth and a day in quest of it,
Until I found and saw it, as the nun

My sister saw it, and Galahad swore the
vow,
And good Sir Bors, our Lancelot's cousin,
swore,
And Lancelot swore, and many among
the knights,
And Gawain swore, and louder than the
rest'

Then spake the monk Ambrosius, asking
him,
'What said the King? Did Arthur take
the vow?'

'Nay, for my lord,' said Percivale,
'the King,
Was not in hall for early that same day,
Scaped thro' a cavern from a bandit hold,
An outraged maiden sprang into the hall
Crying on help for all her shining hair
Was smear'd with earth, and either milky
or am

Red-rent with hooks of bramble, and all
she wro

Torn as a sail that leaves the rope is torn
In tempest so the King arose and went
To smoke the scandalous hive of those
wild bees

That made such honey in his realm
Howbeit

Some little of this marvel he too saw,
Returning o'er the plain that then began
To darken under Camelot, whence the
King

Look'd up, calling aloud, "Lo, there 't
the roos
Of our great hall aie roll'd in thunder
smoke!"
Pray Heaven, they be not smitten by the
bolt"

For dear to Arthur was that hall of ours,
As having there so oft with all his knights
Feasted, and as the statelyest under
heaven

"O brother, had you known our mighty
hall,
Which Merlin built for Arthur long ago!
For all the sacred mount of Camelot,
And all the dim rich city, roof by roof,
Tower after tower, spine beyond spine,

By grove, and garden-lawn, and rushing
brook,
Climbs to the mighty hall that Merlin
built
And four great zones of sculpture, set
betwixt
With many a mystic symbol, gird the hall
And in the lowest beasts are slaying men,
And in the second men are slaying beasts,
And on the third are warriors, perfect men,
And on the fourth are men with glowing
wings,
And over all one statue in the mould
Of Arthur, made by Merlin, with a crown,
And peak'd wings pointed to the Northern
Star

And eastward fronts the statue, and the
crown
And both the wings are made of gold,
and flame
At sunrise till the people in fair fields,
Wasted so often by the heathen hordes,
Behold it, crying, "We have still a King"

"And, brother, had you known our hall
within,
Broader and higher than any in all the
lands!
Where twelve great windows blazon
Arthur's wars,
And all the light that falls upon the board
Streams thro' the twelve great battles of
our King
Nay, one there is, and at the eastern end,
Wealthy with wandering lines of mount
and mere,
Where Arthur finds the brand Excalibur
And also one to the west, and counter to it,
And blank and who shall blazon it?
when and how?"—
O there, perchance, when all our wails are
done,
The brand Excalibur will be cast away

"So to this hall full quickly rode the
King,
In honor lest the work by Merlin wrought,
Dreamlike, should on the sudden vanish,
wrapt
In unmemorable folds of rolling fire

And in he iode, and up I glanced, and saw
The golden dragon sparkling over all
And many of those who burnt the hold,
their arms

Hack'd, and their foreheads gumed with
smoke, and sear'd,
Follow'd, and in among bright faces, ours,
Full of the vision, prest and then the
King

Spake to me, being nearest, "Percivale,"
(Because the hall was all in tumult—some
Vowing, and some protesting), "what is
this?"

"O brother, when I told him what had
chanced,
My sister's vision, and the rest, his face
Darken'd, as I have seen it more than
once,
When some brave deed seem'd to be done
in vain,
Darken, and "Woe is me, my knights,"
he cried,
"Had I been here, ye had not sworn
the vow"
Bold was mine answer, "Had thyself
been here,
My King, thou wouldest have sworn"
"Yea, yea," said he,
"Art thou so bold and hast not seen the
Grail?"

"Nay, lord, I heard the sound, I
saw the light,
But since I did not see the Holy Thing,
I sware a vow to follow it till I saw"

"Then when he ask'd us, knight by
knight, if any
Had seen it, all their answers were as
one
"Nay, lord, and therefore have we sworn
our vows"

"Lo now," said Arthur, "have ye
seen a cloud?
What go ye into the wilderness to see?"

"Then Galahad on the sudden, and in
a voice
Shrilling along the hall to Arthur, call'd,

"But I, Sir Arthur, saw the Holy Grail,
I saw the Holy Grail and heard a cry—
'O Galahad, and O Galahad, follow me'"

"Ah, Galahad, Galahad," said the
King, "for such
As thou art is the vision, not for these
Thy holy nun and thou have seen a sign—
Hoher is none, my Percivale, than she—
A sign to maim this Order which I made
But ye, that follow but the leader's bell"
(Brother, the King was haid upon his
knights)

"Taliesin is our fullest throat of song,
And one hath sung and all the dumb will
sing

Lancelot is Lancelot, and hath overborne
Five knights at once, and every younger
knight,

Unpiven, holds himself as Lancelot,
Till overborne by one, he learns—and ye,
What are ye? Galahads?—no, nor Pe-
civales"

(For thus it pleased the King to range
me close

After Sir Galahad), "nay," said he,
"but men

With strength and will to right the
wrong'd, of power

To lay the sudden heads of violence flat,
Knights that in twelve great battles
splash'd and dyed

The strong White Horse in his own
heathen blood—

But one hath seen, and all the blind will
see

Go, since your vows are sacied, being
made

Yet—for ye know the cries of all my
realm

Pass thro' this hall—how often, O my
knights,

Your pllices being vacant at my side,
This chance of noble deeds will come
and go

Unchallenged, while ye follow wandering
fires

Lost in the quagmire! Many of you, yet
most,

Retrun no more ye think I show myself

Too dark a prophet come now, let us
meet
The morrow morn once more in one full
field
Of gracious pastime, that once more the
King,
Before ye leave him for this Quest, may
count
The yet-unbroken strength of all his
knights,
Rejoicing in that Order which he made "

' So when the sun biode next from
under ground,
All the great table of our Arthur closed
And clash'd in such a tourney and so full,
So many lances broken—never yet
Had Camelot seen the like, since Arthur
came,
And I myself and Galahad, for a strength
Was in us from the vision, overthrew
So many knights that all the people cried,
And almost burst the brieries in their
heat,
Shouting, " Sir Galahad and Sir Peirc-
vale ! "

' But when the next day brake from
under ground—
O brother, had you known our Camelot,
Built by old kings, age after age, so old
The King himself had feare that it would
fall,
So strange, and rich, and dim, for where
the roofs
Totter'd toward each other in the sky,
Met foreheads all along the street of those
Who watch'd us pass, and lowe, and
where the long
Rich galleries, lady liden, weigh'd the
necks
Of dragons clinging to the crazy walls,
Thicker than drops from thunder, showers
of flowers
Fell as we past, and men and boys astride
On wyvern, lion, dragon, griffin, swan,
At all the corners, named us each by
name,
Calling " God speed ! " but in the ways
below

The knights and ladies wept, and rich
and poor
Wept, and the King himself could hardly
speak
For grief, and all in middle street the
Queen,
Who rode by Lancelot, wail'd and shriek'd
aloud,
" This madness has come on us for our
sins "
So to the Gate of the three Queens we
came,
Where Arthur's wais are render'd mys-
tically,
And thence departed every one his way

' And I was lifted up in heat, and
thought
Of all my late shown prowess in the lists,
How my strong lance h̄d beaten down
the knights,
So many and famous names, and never
yet
Had heaven appear'd so blue, nor earth
so green,
For all my blood danced in me, and I
knew
That I should light upon the Holy Grail

' Thereafter, the dark warning of our
King,
That most of us would follow wandering
fies,
Came like a driving gloom across my
mind
Then every evil word I had spoken once,
And every evil thought I had thought of
old,
And every evil deed I ever did,
Awoke and cried, " This Quest is not for
thee "
And lifting up mine eyes, I found myself
Alone, and in a land of sand and thorns,
And I was thirsty even unto death,
And I, too, cried, " This Quest is not for
thee "

' And on I rode, and when I thought
my thirst
Would slay me, saw deep lawns, and then
a brook,

With one sharp rapid, where the crisping white

Play'd ever back upon the sloping wave,
And took both e'er and eye, and o'er the brook

Were apple trees, and apples by the brook
Fallen, and on the lawns "I will rest here,"

I said, "I am not worthy of the Quest,"
But even while I drank the brook, and ate
The goodly apples, all these things it once
Fell into dust, and I was left alone,
And thirsting, in a land of sand and thorns

"And then behold a woman at a door
Spinning, and fan the house whereby she sat,
And kind the woman's eyes and innocent,
And all her bearing gracious, and she rose
Opening her arms to meet me, as who should say,

"Rest here," but when I touch'd her,
Lo! she, too,
Fell into dust and nothing, and the house
Became no better than a broken shed
And in it a dead babe, and also this
Fell into dust, and I was left alone

"And on I rode, and greater was my thirst

Then flush'd a yellow gleam across the world,

And where it smote the plowshue in the field,

The plowman left his plowing, and fell down

Before it, where it glitter'd on her pail,
The milkmaid left her milking, and fell down

Before it, and I knew not why, but thought

"The sun is rising," tho' the sun had risen
Then was I ware of one that on me moved
In golden armour with a crown of gold
About a casque all jewels, and his hoise
In golden armour jewell'd everywhere
And on the splendour came, flashing me blind,

And seem'd to me the Lord of all the world,

Being so huge But when I thought he meant

To crush me, moving on me, lo! he, too,
Open'd his arms to embracie me as he came,

And up I went and touch'd him, and he, too,

Fell into dust, and I was left alone
And weeping in a land of sand and thorns

"And I rode on and found a mighty hill,

And on the top, a city wall'd the spires
Prick'd with incredible pinnacles into heaven

And by the gateway stirr'd a crowd, and these

Cried to me climbing, "Welcome, Percivale!"

Thou mightiest and thou purest among men!"

And glad was I and clomb, but found it top

No man, nor any voice And thence I post

For thro' a ruined city, and I saw
That man had once dwelt there, but there I found

Only one man of an exceeding age

"Where is that goodly company," said I,
"That so cried out upon me?" and he had

Scarce my voice to answer, and yet grasp'd,

"Whence and what art thou?" and even as he spoke

Fell into dust, and disappear'd, and I was left alone once more, and cried in grief,

"Lo, if I find the Holy Grial itself
And touch it, it will crumble into dust"

"And thence I dropt into a lowly vale,
Low as the hill was high, and where the vale

Was lowest, found a chapel, and thereby
A holy hermit in a hermitage,
To whom I told my phantoms, and he said

"O son, thou hast not true humility,
The highest virtue, mother of them all,
For when the Lord of all things made
Himself
Naked of glory for His mortal change,
'Fake thou my robe,' she said, 'for all
is thine,'
And all her form shone forth with sudden
light
So that the angels were amazed, and she
Follow'd Him down, and like a flying
stai
Led on the gray-hair'd wisdom of the east,
But her thou hast not known for what
is this
Thou thoughtest of thy prowess and thy
sins?
Thou hast not lost thyself to save thyself
As Galahad." When the hermit made
an end,
In silv'ry armour suddenly Galahad shone
Before us, and against the chappel door
Laid lince, and enter'd, and we knelt in
prayer
And there the hermit slaked my burning
thirst,
And at the sacring of the mass I saw
The holy elements alone, but he,
"Saw ye no more? I, Galahad, saw
the Grail,
The Holy Grail, descend upon the
shrine
I saw the fiery fire as of a child
That smote itself into the bread, and went,
And hither am I come, and never yet
Hath what thy sister taught me first to
see,
This Holy Thing, fail'd from my side, nor
come
Cover'd, but moving with me night and
day,
Fainter by day, but always in the night
Blood red, and sliding down the blac'ken'd
marsh
Blood-red, and on the naked mountain
top
Blood-red, and in the sleeping mere below
Blood-red And in the strength of this
I rode,
Shattering all evil customs everywhere,

And past thro' Pagan realms, and made
them mine,
And clash'd with Pagan hordes, and bore
them down,
And broke thro' all, and in the strength
of this
Come victor But my time is hard at
hand,
And hence I go, and one will crown me
king
Far in the spiritual city, and come thou,
too,
For thou shalt see the vision when I go "

'While thus he spake, his eye, dwel'ing
on mine,
Drew me, with power upon me, till I
grew
One with him, to believe as he believed
Then, when the day began to wane, we
went

'There rose a hill that none but man
could climb,
Scar'd with a hundred wintry winter-
courses—
Storm at the top, and when we gun'd it,
storm
Round us and death, for every moment
glanced
His silv'ry arms and gloom'd so quick
and thick
The lightnings here and there to left and
right
Struck, till the dry old trunks about us,
dead,
Yea, rotten with a hundred years of death,
Sprang into fire and at the base we found
On either hand, as far as eye could see,
A great black swamp and of an evil smell,
Put black, put whiten'd with the bones
of men,
Not to be crost, save that some ancient
king
Had built a way, where, link'd with
many a bridge,
A thousand piers ran into the great Sea
And Galahad fled along them bridge by
bridge,
And every bridge as quickly as he crost

Spiang into fire and vanish'd, tho' I
yeain'd
To follow, and thrice above him all the
heavens
Open'd and blazed with thunder such as
seem'd
Shoutings of all the sons of God and frost
At once I saw him far on the great Sea,
In silver shining armour staiy-clear,
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
Clothed in white samite or a luminous cloud
And with exceeding swiftness ran the boat,
If boat it were—I sww not whence it came
And when the heavens open'd and blized
again

Roaring, I saw him like a silver star—
And had he set the sail, or had the boat
Become a living creature clad with wings?
And o'er his head the Holy Vessel hung
redder than any rose, a joy to me,
For now I knew the veil had been with
drawn

Then in a moment when they blazed again
Opening, I saw the least of little stars
Down on the waste, and stright beyond
the star

I saw the spiritual city and all her spnes
And gateways in a glory like one peul—
No larger, tho' the goul of all the saints—
Strike from the sei, and from the stui
there shot

A rose red sprinkle to the city, and there
Dwelt, and I knew it was the IIoly Grail,
Which never eyes on earth agan shall see
Then fell the floods of heaven drowning
the deep

And how my feet recrost the deathful ridge
No memory in me lives, but that I touch d
The chapel-doois at dawn I know, and
thence

Taking my wai horse from the holy man,
Glad that no phantom vext me more,
return'd

To whence I came, the gate of Aithur's
wars'

'O brother,' ask'd Ambrosius,—'for
in sooth
These ancient books—and they would win
thee—teem,

Only I find not theie this Holy Grail,
With miracles and maivels like to these,
Not all unlike, which oftentime I read,
Who iend but on my breviary with ease,
Till my head swims, and then go foith
and pass

Down to the little thorpē that lies so close,
And almost plaster'd like a mārin's nest
To these old walls—and mingle with our
folk,

And knowing every honest face of theus
As well as ever shepheid knew his sheep,
And every homely seiet in their hearts,
Delight myself with gossip and old wives,
And ills and aches, and teethings, lyings
in,

And muithful sayings, children of the place,
I hit have no meaning half a league awy
Or lulling random squabbles when they
rise,

Chafferings and chatterings at the market-
cross,

Rejoice, small man, in this small world
of mine,

Yer, even in their hens and in theu eggs—
O brother, swing this Sir Galahud,
Came ye on none but phantoms in your
quest,

No man, no woman?'

Then Sir Periciale
'All men, to one so bound by such a vow,
And women were as phantoms O, my
brother,

Why wilt thou shame me to confess to thee
How fu I falter'd from my quest and vow?
For after I had lain so many nights,
A bedmate of the snail and eft and snake,
In grass and burdock, I was changed to
wan

And meagie, and the vision had not
come,

And then I chanced upon a goodly town
With one great dwelling in the middle
of it,

Thither I made, and there wis I disarm'd
By maidens each as fair as any flower
But when they led me into hall, behold,
The Princess of that castle was the one,
Brother, and that one only, who had ever

Made my heut leap , for when I moved
of old

A slender page about her father's hall,
And she a slender maiden, all my heart
Went after her with longing yet we
twain

Had never kiss'd a kiss, or vow'd a vow
And now I came upon hei once again,
And one had wedded her, and he was dead,
And all his land and wealth and state
were hers

And while I tarried, every day she set
A banquet richer than the day before
By me , for all her longing and her will
Was toward me as of old , till one fair
morn,

I walking to and fro beside a stream
That flash'd across hei orchard underneath
Her castle walls, she stole upon my walk,
And calling me the greatest of all knights,
Embraced me, and so kiss'd me the first
time,

And give herself and all her wealth to me
Then I remember'd Arthur's warning
word,

That most of us would follow wandering
fics,
And the Quest fided in my heart Anon,
The hounds of all her people drew to me,
With supplication both of knees and
tongue

"We have heard of thee thou art our
greatest knight,
Our Lady says it, and we well believe
Wed thou our Lady, and rule over us,
And thou shalt be as Arthur in our land "
O me, my brother ! but one night my vow
Bount me within, so that I rose and fled,
But wail'd and wept, and hated mine own
self,

And ev'n the Holy Quest, and all but her ,
Then after I was join'd with Galahad
Cared not for her, nor anything upon
couth '

Then said the monk, ' Poor men, when
yule is cold,
Must be content to sit by little fires
And this am I, so that ye care for me
Ever so little , yet, and blest be Heaven

That brought thee here to this poor house
of ours

Where all the brethren are so hard, to
walm

My cold heart with a friend but O the
pity

To find thine own fist love once more—
to hold,

Hold her a wealthy bide within thine
arms,

Or all but hold, and then—cast her aside,
Foregoing all her sweetness, like a weed
For we that want the warmth of double
life,

We that are plagued with dreams of
something sweet

Beyond all sweetness in a life so rich,—
Ah, blessed Lord, I speak too earthlywise,
Seeing I never stray'd beyond the cell,
But live like an old badger in his earth,
With earth about him everywhere, despite
All fast and penance Saw ye none be
side,

None of your knights ?'

' Yea so,' said Percivale
' One night my pathway swerving east, I
saw

The pelican on the casque of our Sir Bois
All in the middle of the rising moon
And toward him spurr'd, and halld him,
and he me,

And each made joy of either , then he
ask'd,

" Where is he ? hast thou seen him—
Lancelot ?—Once,"

Said good Sir Bois, " he dash'd across me
—mad,

And maddening what he rode and when
I cried,

' Ridest thou then so hotly on a quest
So holy,' Lancelot shouted, ' Stay me not !
I have been the sluggard, and I ride apace,
For now there is a lion in the way
So vanish'd "

' Then Sir Bois had ridden on
Softly, and sorrowing for our Lancelot,
Because his former madness, once the talk
And scandal of our table, had return'd ,

For Lancelot's kith and kin so worship him

That ill to him is ill to them, to Bois Beyond the rest he well had been content Not to have seen, so Lancelot might have seen,

The Holy Cup of healing, and, indeed, Being so clouded with his grief and love, Small heart was his after the Holy Quest If God would send the vision, well if not, The Quest and he were in the hands of Heaven

'And then, with small adventure met,
Sir Bois

Rode to the loneliest tract of all the realm, And found a people there among the crags,

Oui race and blood, a remnant that were left

Paynim amid their circles, and the stones They pitch up straight to heaven and their wise men

Were strong in that old magic which can trace

The wandering of the stars, and scoff'd at him

And this high Quest as at a simple thing Told him he follow'd—almost Arthur's words—

A mocking fire "what other fire than he,

Whereby the blood beats, and the blossom blows,

And the sea rolls, and all the world is warm'd?"

And when his answer chased them, the rough crowd,

Hearing he had a difference with their priests,

Seized him, and bound and plunged him into a cell

Of great piled stones, and lying bounden there

In darkness thio' innumerable hours

He heard the hollow-sounding heavens sweep

Over him till by miracle—what else?— Heavy as it was, a great stone slipt and fell,

Such as no wind could move and thio' the gap

Glimme'd the streaming scud then came a night

Still as the day was loud, and thio' the gap

The seven clear stars of Arthur's Table Round—

For, brother, so one night, because they roll

Thio' such a round in heaven, we named the stars,

Rejoicing in ourselves and in our King—

And these, like bright eyes of familiar friends,

In on him alone "And then to me, to me,"

Said good Sir Bors, "beyond all hopes of mine,

Who scarce had pray'd or ask'd it for myself—

Across the seven clear stars—O grace to me—

In colour like the fingers of a hand Before a burning taper, the sweet Grail Glided and past, and close upon it peald A sharp quick thunder" Afterwards, a mud,

Who kept our holy faith among her kin In secret, enturing, looscd and let him go'

To whom the monk "And I remember now

That pelican on the cisque Sir Bors it was

Who spake so low and sadly at our board, And mighty reverent at our grace w^s he A squie set man and honest, nd his eyes,

An out door sign of all the warmth within, Smiled with his lips—a smile beneath a cloud,

But heaven had meant it for a sunny one Ay, ay, Sir Bois, who else? But when ye reach'd

The city, found ye all your knights re turn'd,

Or was there sooth in Arthur's prophecy, Tell me, and what said each, and what the King?"

Then answer'd Peircivale 'And that
can I,
Brother, and truly, since the living words
Of so great men as Lancelot and our King
Pass not from door to door and out agan,
But sit within the house O, when we
reach'd

The city, our hoises stumbling as they
trode
On heaps of ruin, hornless unicorns,
Crack'd basilisks, and splinter'd cocka-
trices,
And shatter'd talbots, which had left the
stones
Raw, that they fell from, brought us to
the hall

' And there sat Arthur on the dais
throne,
And those that had gone out upon the
Quest,
Wasted and worn, and but a tithe of
them,
And those that had not, stood before the
King,
Who, when he saw me, rose, and bid
me hail,
Saying, "A wofire in thine eye reproves
Our scar of some disastrous chance for thee
On hill, or plain, at sea, or flooding ford
So fierce a gile made havoc here of late
Among the strange devices of our kings,
Yet, shook this newel, stronger hall of
ours,
And from the statue Merlin moulded for
us
Half wrench'd a golden wing, but now—
the Quest,
This vision—hast thou seen the Holy Cup,
That Joseph brought of old to Glaston-
bury?"

' So when I told him all thyself hast
heard,
Ambrosius, and my fresh but fixt resolve
To pass away into the quiet life,
He answer'd not, but, sharply turning,
ask'd
Of Gawain, "Gawain, was this Quest for
thee?"

" " Nay, lord," said Gawain, " not for
such as I
Therefore I communed with a saintly man,
Who made me sure the Quest was not
for me,
For I was much awearied of the Quest
But found a silk pavilion in a field,
And merry maidens in it, and then this
gale
Toke my pavilion from the tenting pin,
And blew my meiry maidens all about
With all discomfort, yea, and but for this,
My twelvemonth and a day were pleasant
to me "

' He ceased, and Arthur turn'd to
whom at first
He saw not, for Sir Bors, on entering,
push'd
Athwart the thong to Lancelot, caught
his hand,
Held it, and there, half-hidden by him,
stood,
Until the King espied him, saying to him,
" Hail, Bors! if ever loyal man and true
Could see it, thou hast seen the Grial,"
and Bors,
" Ask me not, for I may not speak of it
I saw it," and the tears were in his eyes

' Then there remain'd but Lancelot, for
the rest
Spake but of sundry perils in the storm,
Perhaps, like him of Cana in Holy Writ,
Our Arthur kept his best until the last,
" Thou, too, my Lancelot," ask'd the
King, " my friend,
Our mightiest, hath this Quest avul'd for
thee?"

" " Our mightiest!" answer'd Lancelot,
with a groan,
" O King!" — and when he paused,
methought I spied
A dying fire of madness in his eyes—
" O King, my friend, if friend of thine I be,
Happier we those that walter in their sin,
Swine in the mud, that cannot see for
slime,
Slime of the ditch but in me lived a sin
So strange, of such a kind, that all of pure,

Noble, and knightly in me twined and
clung
Round that one sin, until the wholesome
flower
And poisonous grew together, each as
each,
Not to be pluck'd asunder, and when thy
knights
Sware, I sware with them only in the hope
That could I touch or see the Holy Grail
They might be pluck'd asunder Then I
spake
To one most holy saint, who wept and
said,
That save they could be pluck'd asunder,
all
My quest were but in vain, to whom I
vow'd
That I would work according as he will'd
And forth I went, and while I yearn'd
and strove
To tear the twain asunder in my heart,
My madness came upon me as of old,
And whipt me into waste fields far away,
There was I beaten down by little men,
Mean knights, to whom the moving of
my sword
And shadow of my spear had been enough
To scare them from me once, and then
I came
All in my folly to the naked shore,
Wide flats, where nothing but coarse
grasses grew,
But such a blast, my King, began to blow,
So loud a blast along the shore and sea,
Ye could not hear the waves for the blast,
Tho' heapt in mounds and ridges all the
sea
Drove like a cataract, and all the sand
Swept like a river, and the clouded
heavens
Were shaken with the motion and the
sound
And blackening in the sea foam sway'd a
boat,
Half swallow'd in it, anchor'd with a
chain,
And in my madness to myself I said,
'I will embark and I will lose myself,
And in the great sea wash away my sin '

I burst the chain, I sprang into the boat
Seven days I drove along the dreary deep,
And with me drove the moon and all the
stars,
And the wind fell, and on the seventh
night
I heard the shingle grinding in the surge,
And felt the boat shock earth, and looking
up,
Behold, the enchanted towers of Car
bonek,
A castle like a rock upon a rock,
With chasm-like portals open to the sea,
And steps that met the breaker ' there
was none
Stood near it but a lion on each side
That kept the entry, and the moon was
full
Then from the boat I leapt, and up the
sturs
There drew my sword With sudden
flaming manes
Those two great beasts rose upright like
a man,
Each gript a shoulder, and I stood
between,
And, when I would have smitten them,
heud a voice,
' Doubt not, go forward, if thou doubt,
the bursts
Will tell thee piecemeal ' Then with
violence
The sword was dash'd from out my hand,
and fell
And up into the sounding hall I past,
But nothing in the sounding hall I saw,
No bench nor table, painting on the wall
Or shield of knight, only the rounded
moon
Thro' the tall oriel on the rolling sea
But always in the quiet house I heaid,
Clear as a lark, high o'er me is a lark,
A sweet voice singing in the topmost
tower
To the eastward up I climb'd a thousand
steps
With pain as in a dream I seem'd to
climb
For ever at the last I reach'd a door,
A light was in the crannies, and I heard,

'Glory and joy and honour to our Lord
And to the Holy Vessel of the Grail'
Then in my madness I essay'd the door,
It gave , and tho' a stormy glare, a heat
As from a seventimes-heated furnace, I,
Blasted and burnt, and blinded as I was,
With such a fierceness that I swoon'd
away—

O, yet methought I saw the Holy Grail,
All pall'd in crimson samite, and around
Great angels, awful shapes, and wings
and eyes

And but for all my madness and my sin,
And then my swooning, I had sworn I
saw

That which I saw , but what I saw was
veil'd

And cover'd , and this Quest was not for
me "

'So speaking, and here ceasing, Lance-
lot left

The hull long silent, till Sir Gawun—nay,
Brother, I need not tell thee foolish
wooids,—

A reckles and irreverent knight was he,
Now bolden'd by the silence of his
King,—

Well, I will tell thee "O King, my
liege," he said,

"Hath Gwain fail'd in any quest of
thine?

When hwe I smit stroke in foughthen
field?

But as for thine, my good friend Percivale,
Thy holy nun and thou have driven men
mad,

Yea, made ou mighliest madder than
our least

But by mine eyes and by mine ears I
sweat,

I will be deifer than the blue eyed cat,
And thicc is blind as any noonday owl,
To holy virgins in their ecstasies,
Henceforward "

"Deifer," said the blameless King,
"Gawin, and blinder unto holy things
Hope not to make thyself by idle vows,
Being too blind to have desir to see

But if indeed there came a sign from
heaven,
Blessed are Bois, Lancelot and Peircvale,
For these have seen according to their
sight

For every fiery prophet in old times,
And all the sacred madness of the bard,
When God made music thro' them, could
but speak

His music by the framework and the
choird ,
And as ye saw it ye have spoken truth

" Nay—but thou arrest, Lancelot
never yet

Could all of true and noble in knight and
man

Twine round one sin, whatever it might
be,

With such a closeness, but apart there
grew,

Sive that he were the swine thou spakest
of,

Some root of knighthood and pure noble-
ness ,

Wheierto see thou, that it may bear its
flower

" And spake I not too truly, O my
knights?

Was I too dark a prophet when I sud
To those who went upon the Holy Quest,
That most of them would follow wan-
dering fires,

Lost in the quagmire?—lost to me and
gone,

And left me gazing at a barren board,
And a lean Oider—scaine ietun'd a
tithe—

And out of those to whom the vision came
My greatest hardly will believe he saw ,
Another hath beheld it afar off,
And leaving human wrongs to right them
selves,

Cares but to pass into the silent life
And one hath had the vision free to
face,

And now his chau desires him here in
vain,

However theymay crown him otherwhere

“ And some among you held, that if
the King
Had seen the sight he would have sworn
the vow
Not easily, seeing that the King must
guard
That which he rules, and is but as the hind
To whom a spicce of land is given to
plow
Who may not wander from the allotted
field
Before his work be done, but, being done,
Let visions of the night or of the day
Come, as they will, and many a time
they come,
Until this earth he walks on seems not
earth,
This light that strikes his eyeball is not
light,
This air that smites his forehead is not un
But vision—yea, his very hand and foot—
In moments when he feels he cannot die,
And knows himself no vision to himself,
Nor the high God a vision, nor that One
Who rose again ye have seen what ye
have seen ”

‘ So spake the King I knew not all
he meant ’

PELLEAS AND ETTARRE

KING ARTHUR made new knights to fill
the gap
Left by the Holy Quest, and as he sat
In hall at old Caeleon, the high dooors
Were softly sunder'd, and thro' these a
youth,
Pelleas, and the sweet smell of the fields
Past, and the sunshine came along with
him

‘ Make me thy knight, because I know,
Sir King,
All that belongs to knighthood, and I love
Such was his cry for having heaid the
King
Had let proclaim a tournament—the prize
A golden circlet and a knightly sword,
Full fain had Pelleas for his lady won

The golden circlet, for himself the sword
And there were those who knew him near
the King,
And promised for him and Aithui made
him knight

And this new knight, Sir Pelleas of the
isles—
But lately come to his inheritance,
And lord of many a barren isle was he—
Riding at noon, a day or twain before,
Across the forest call'd of Dern, to find
Caeleon and the King, had felt the sun
Beat like a strong knight on his helm,
and ree'l'd
Almost to falling from his horse, but
sw
Near him a mound of even sloping side,
Whereon a hundred stately beeches giew,
And here and there great hollies under
them ,
But for a mile all round was open space,
And fern and heath and slowly Pelleas
diew
To that dim day, then binding his good
horse
To a tice, cast himself down, and as he
lay
At random looking over the brown earth
Thro' that green glooming twilight of the
grove,
It seem'd to Pelleas that the fern without
Burst as a living fire of emeralds,
So that his eyes were drizzled looking at it
Then o'er it crost the dimness of a cloud
Flouting, and once the shadow of a bird
Flying, and then a frown, and his eyes
closed
And since he loved all maidens, but no
maid
In special, half awake he whisper'd,
‘ Where ?
O where ? I love thee, tho' I know thee
not
For fair thou art and pure as Guinevere,
And I will make thee with my speu and
sword
As famous—O my Queen, my Guinevere,
For I will be thine Arthur when we
meet ’

Suddenly waken'd with a sound of talk
And laughter at the limit of the wood,
And glancing thro' the hoary boles, he saw,
Strange as to some old prophet might
have seem'd

A vision hovering on a sea of fire,
Damsels in divers colous like the cloud
Of sunset and sunrise, and all of them
On horses, and the horses richly trapt
Burst high in that bright line of bracken
stood

And all the damsels talk'd confusedly,
And one was pointing this way, and one
that,
Because the way was lost

And Pelleas rose,
And loosed his horse, and led him to the
light
There she that seem'd the chief among
them sud,
'In happy time behold our pilot star !
Youth, we are damsels-eriant, and we ride,
Arm'd as ye see, to tilt aginst the knights
There at Caerleon, but have lost our way
To right? to left? straight forward? back
agin?
Which? tell us quickly'

And Pelleas grazing thought,
'Is Guinevere herself so beautiful?'
For large her violet eyes look'd, and her
bloom
A rosy dawn kindled in sunless heavens,
And round her limbs, mature in woman
hood,
And slender was her hand and small her
shape,
And but for those large eyes, the haunts
of scorn,
She might have seem'd a toy to trifle with,
And pass and care no more But while
he gazed
The beauty of her flesh blush'd the boy,
As tho' it were the beauty of her soul
For as the base man, judging of the good,
Puts his own baseness in him by default
Of will and nature, so did Pelleas find
All the young beauty of his own soul to
hers,

Believing her, and when she spake to
him,
Stammer'd, and could not make her a
replay

For out of the waste islands had he come,
Where saving his own sisters he had known
Scarce any but the women of his isles,
Rough wives, that laugh'd and scream'd
against the gulls,
Makers of nets, and living from the sea

Then with a slow smile turn'd the lady
round
And look'd upon her people, and as when
A stone is flung into some sleeping tarn,
The circle widens till it lip the marge,
Spread the slow smile thro' all her com-
pany

Three knights were there among, and they
too smiled,
Scorning him, for the lady was Ettaire,
And she was a great lady in her land

Again she said, 'O wild and of the
woods,
Knowest thou not the fashion of our
speech?
Or have the Heavens but given thee a fair
face,
Lacking a tongue?'

'O damsel,' answer'd he,
'I woke from dreams, and coming out
of gloom
Was dazzled by the sudden light, and
crave
Pardon but will ye to Caerleon? I
Go likewise shall I lead you to the King?'

'Lead then,' she sud, and thro' the
woods they went
And while they rode, the meaning in his
eyes,

His tenderness of manner, and chaste awe,
His broken utterances and bashfulness,
Were all a burthen to her, and in her
heart
She mutter'd, 'I have lighted on a fool,
Raw, yet so stately!' But since her mind
was bent
On hearing, after trumpet blown, her name

And title, ‘Queen of Beauty,’ in the lists
Cried—and beholding him so strong, she
thought
That peradventure he will fight for me,
And win the circlet therefore flatter’d
him,
Being so gracious, that he wellnigh deem’d
His wish by hers was echo’d, and her
knights
And all her damsels too were gracious to
him,
For she was a great lady

And when they reach’d
Caeleon, ere they past to lodging, she,
Taking his hand, ‘O the strong hand,’
she said,
‘See ! look at mine ! but wilt thou fight
for me,
And win me this fine circlet, Pelleas,
That I may love thee ?’

Then his helpless heart
Leapt, and he cried, ‘Ay ! wilt thou if I
win ?’
‘Ay, that will I,’ she answer’d, and she
laugh’d,
And straitly nipt the hand, and flung it
from her,
Then glanced askew at those three knights
of hers,
Till all her ladies laugh’d along with her

‘O happy world,’ thought Pelleas, ‘all,
meseems,
Aie happy, I the happiest of them all !
Nor slept that night for pleasure in his
blood,
And green wood-ways, and eyes among
the leaves,
Then being on the morrow knighted,
sware

To love one only And as he came away,
The men who met him round’d on their
heels
And wonder’d after him, because his face
Shone like the countenance of a priest of
old
Against the flame about a sacrifice
Kindled by fire from heaven so glad
was he

Then Aithur made vast banquets, and
strange knights
From the four winds came in and each
one sat,
Tho’ serv’d with choice from air, land,
stream, and sea,
Oft in mid banquet measuring with his
eyes
His neighbours make and might and
Pelleas look’d
Noble amon the noble, for he dream’d
His lady loved him, and he knew himself
Loved of the King and him his new-
made knight
Woishipt, whose lightest whisper moved
him more
Than all the ranged reasons of the world

Then blush’d and blake the morning
of the jousts,
And this was call’d ‘The Tournament of
Youth’
For Aithur, loving his young knight,
withheld
His older and his mightier from the lists,
That Pelleas might obtain his lady’s love,
Accoiding to her promise, and remain
Lord of the tourney And Aithur had
the jousts
Down in the flat field by the shore of Usk
Holden the gilded parapets were crown’d
With faces, and the great tower fill’d with
eyes
Up to the summit, and the trumpets blew
There all day long Sir Pelleas kept the
field
With honour so by that strong hand of
his
The sword and golden circlet were
achieved

Then rang the shout his lady loved
the heat
Of pride and glory fired hei face, her eye
Sparkled, she caught the circlet from his
lance,
And there before the people crown’d
herself
So for the last time she was gracious to
him

Then at Cierleon for a space—her look
Bright for all others, cloudier on her
knight—
Linger'd Ettarre and seeing Pelleas
droop,
Said Guinevere, 'We marvel at thee
much,
O damsel, wearing this unsunny face
To him who won thee glory' And she
said,
'Had ye not held your Lancelot in your
bowel,
My Queen, he had not won' Whereat
the Queen,
As one whose foot is bitten by an ant,
Glanced down upon her, turn'd and went
her way

But after, when her damsels, and herself,
And those three knights all set their
faces home,
Sir Pelleas follow'd She that saw him
cried,
'Damsels—and yet I should be shamed
to say it—
I cannot bide Sir Bably Keep him back
Among yourselves Would rather that
we had
Some rough old knight who knew the
worldly way,
Albeit grizzlier than a bear, to ride
And jest with take him to you, keep
him off,
And pamper him with papmeat, if ye will,
Old milky fables of the wolf and sheep,
Such as the wholesome mothers tell their
boys
Nay, should ye try him with a merry one
To find his mettle, good and if he fly
us,
Small mitter! let him' This her
damsels head,
And mindful of her small and cruel hand,
They, closing round him thro' the journey
home,
Acted her best, and always from her side
Restrain'd him with all manner of device,
So that he could not come to speech
with her

And when she gain'd her castle, upsprang
the bridge,
Down rang the gate of iron thro' the
groove,
And he was left alone in open field

'These be the ways of ladies,' Pelleas
thought,
'To those who love them, trials of our
faith

Yea, let her prove me to the uttermost,
For loyal to the uttermost am I'
So made his moan, and darkness falling,
sought

A priory not far off, there lodged, but
rose
With morning every day, and, moist or
dry,
Full aim'd upon his charger all day long
Sat by the walls, and no one open'd to
him

And this persistence turn'd her scorn
to wrath
Then calling her threee knights, she
charged them, 'Out'

And drive him from the walls' And out
they came,
But Pelleas overthrew them as they
dash'd
Against him one by one, and these
return'd,
But still he kept his watch beneath the
wall

Thereon her wrath became a hate,
and once,
A week beyond, while walking on the
walls

With her threee knights, she pointed
downward, 'Look,
He haunts me—I cannot breathe—be
sieges me,
Down' strike him' put my hate into
your strokes,
And drive him from my walls' And
down they went,
And Pelleas overthrew them one by one,
And from the town above him cried
Ettaire,
'Bind him, and bring him in'

He heud hei voice,
Then let the strong hand, which had
overthown
Her minion knights, by those he over
threw
Be bounden straight, and so they brought
him in

Then when he came before Ettarre,
the sight
Of her rich beauty made him at one
glance
Moie bondsman in his heut than in his
bonds
Yet with good cheer he spake, ‘Behold
me, Lady,
A prisonei, and the vassal of thy will,
And if thou keep me in thy donjon here,
Content am I so that I see thy face
But once a day for I have sworn my
vows,
And thou hast given thy promise, and I
know
That all these prins ue trials of my futh,
And that thyself, when thou hast seen me
strun’d
And sifted to the utmost, wilt at length
Yield me thy love and know me for thy
knight’

Then she begin to rul so bitterly,
With all her damsels, he was stricken
mute,
But whcn she mock’d his vows and the
great King,
Lighted on woids ‘For pity of thine
own self,
Peace, Lady, peace is he not thine and
mine?’
‘Thou fool,’ she said, ‘I never heard his
voice
But long’d to break away Unbind him
now,
And thrust him out of doors, for save
he be
Fool to the midmost marrow of his bones,
He will return no more’ And those, ha
thrice,
Laugh’d, and unbound, and thrust him
from the gate

And after this, a week beyond, agun
She call’d them, saying, ‘There he
watches yet,
There like a dog before his master’s door
Kick’d, he returns do ye not hate him,
ye?
Ye know yourselves how can ye bide at
peace,
Affronted with his fulsome innocence?
Are ye but creatures of the board and bed,
No men to strike? Fall on him all at
oncc,
And if ye shly him I reck not if ye fail,
Give ye the slave mine order to be bound,
Bind him as hcretofore, and bring him in
It may be ye shall shly him in his bonds’

She spoke, and at her will they couch’d
then speus,
Three agunst one and Gwain passing
by,
Bound upon solitary adventure, saw
Low down beneath the shadow of those
towers
A villuny, three to one and thro’ his
heart
The fire of honou and all noble deeds
Flash’d, and he call’d, ‘I strike upon thy
side—
The cutiffs!’ ‘Nay,’ said Pelleas, ‘but
forben,
He needs no ud who doth his lady’s will’

So Gwain, looking at the villuny done,
Forbore, but in his heart and eagerness
Tiembld and quivcr’d, as the dog, with-
held
A moment from the vermin that he sees
Before him, shivors, eie he springs and
kills

And Pelleas overthrew them, one to
thrice,
And they rose up, and bound, and brought
him in
Then first ha anger, leving Pelleas,
burn’d
Full on her knights in many an evil name
Of craven, weakling, and thrice-beaten
hound

'Yet, take him, ye that scaice aie fit to touch,
Far less to bind, your victor, and thrust him out,
And let who will release him from his bonds
And if he comes again'—there she brake short,
And Pelleas answer'd, 'Lady, for indeed I loved you and I deem'd you beautiful, I cannot brook to see your beauty marid Thoo' evil spite and if ye love me not, I cannot be u to dream you so forswain I had liefer ye were worthy of my love, Than to be loved agan of you—farewell, And tho' ye kill my hope, not yet my love, Vex not yourself ye will not see me more'

While thus he spake, she gazed upon the man
Of princely bearing, tho' in bonds, and thought,
'Why have I push'd him from me? this man loves,
If love there be yet him I loved not Why?
I deem'd him fool? yet, so? or that in him
A something—was it nobler than my self?—
Scem'd my reproach? He is not of my kind
He could not love me, did he know me well
Nay, let him go—and quickly' And her knights
Laugh'd not, but thrust him bounden out of door

Forth sprung Gawain, and loosed him from his bonds,
And flung them o'er the walls, and after wud,
Shaking his hands, as from a lazen's ing,
'Faith of my body,' he said, 'and ut thou not—
Yer thou art he, whom late our Arthur made
Knight of his table, yea and he that won

The circlet? wherefore hast thou so defamed
Thy brotherhood in me and all the rest,
As let these caitiffs on thee work their will?'

And Pelleas answer'd, 'O, then wills are heirs
For whom I won the circlet, and mine, heirs,
Thus to be bounden, so to see her face, Marid tho' it be with spite and mockery now,
Other than when I found her in the woods,
And tho' she hath me bounden but in spite,
And all to flout me, when they bring me in,
Let me be bounden, I sh'll see her face,
Else must I die thio' mine unhappiness'

And Gwain answer'd kindly tho' in scorn,
'Why, let my lady bind me if she will,
And let my lady beat me if she will
But an she send her delegate to thiall
These fighting hands of mine—Christ kill me then
But I will slice him handless by the wrist,
And let my lady seal the stump for him,
Howl as he may But hold we for your friend
Come, ye know nothing here I pledge my troth,
Yea, by the honour of the Table Round,
I will be leal to thee and work thy work,
And tame thy jailing princess to thine hind
Lend me thine horse and arms, and I will say
That I have slain thee She will let me in
To hear the maner of thy fight and fall,
Then, when I come within her counsels,
then
From prime to vesperis will I chant thy praise
As prowest knight and truest lover, more
Than any have sung thee living, till she long

To have thee back in lusty life again,
Not to be bound, save by white bonds
and warm,
Dearer than freedom Wherefore now
thy horse
And armour let me go be comforted
Give me three days to melt her fancy,
and hope
The third night hence will bring thee
news of gold'

Then Pelleas lent his horse and all his
arms,
Saving the goodly sword, his prize, and
took
Gawain's, and said, 'Betray me not, but
help—
Art thou not he whom men call light of
love?'

'Ay,' said Gawain, 'for women be so
light,'
Then bounded forward to the castle walls,
And raised a bugle hanging from his neck,
And winded it, and that so musically
That all the old echoes hidden in the
wall
Rang out like hollow woods at hunting
tide

Up ran a score of damsels to the tower,
'Avaunt,' they cried, 'our lady loves thee
not,'
But Gawain lifting up his visor said,
'Gawain am I, Gawain of Arthur's court,
And I have slain this Pelleas whom ye
hate
Behold his horse and armour Open
gates,
And I will make you merry'

And down they ran,
Her damsels, crying to their lady, 'Lo!
Pelleas is dead—he told us—he that hath
His horse and armour will ye let him in?
He slew him' Gawain, Gawain of the
court,
Sir Gawain—there he waits below the
wall,
Blowing his bugle as who should say him
nay,'

And so, leave given, straight on thro'
open door

Rode Gawain, whom she greeted cour
teously

'Dead, is it so?' she ask'd 'Ay, ay,'
said he,

'And oft in dying cried upon your name'
'Pity on him,' she answer'd, 'a good
knight,

But never let me bide one hour at peace'
'Ay,' thought Gawain, 'and you be fair
enow

But I to your dead man have given my
tooth,

That whom ye loathe, him will I make
you love'

So those three days, aimless about the
land,

Lost in a doubt, Pelleas wandering
Waited, until the third night brought a
moon

With promise of large light on woods and
ways

Hot was the night and silent, but a
sound

Of Gawain ever coming, and this lay—
Which Pelleas had heard sung before the
Queen,

And seen heradden listening—vert his
heart,
And manid his rest—'A worm within the
rose'

'A rose, but one, none other rose had I,
A rose, one rose, and this was wondrous
fur,

One rose, a rose that gladden'd earth and
sky,

One rose, my rose, that sweeten'd all
mine an—

I cared not for the thorns, the thorns
were there

'One rose, a rose to gather by and by,
One rose, a rose, to gather and to wear,
No rose but one—what other rose had I?
One rose, my rose, a rose that will not
die,—

He dies who loves it,—if the worm be
there'

This tender rhyme, and evermore the doubt,
 'Why lingers Gawain with his golden news?'
 So shook him that he could not rest, but
 rode
 Ere midnight to her walls, and bound his horse
 Hard by the gates Wide open were the gates,
 And no watch kept, and in thio' these he past,
 And heard but his own steps, and his own heart
 Beating, for nothing moved but his own self,
 And his own shadow Then he crost the court,
 And spied not any light in hall or bower,
 But saw the postern portal also wide
 Yawning, and up a slope of garden, all
 Of roses white and red, and briambles mixt
 And overgrowing them, went on, and found,
 Here too, all hush'd below the mellow moon,
 Save that one ivylet from a tiny cove
 Came lightening downward, and so spilt itself
 Among the roses, and was lost again
 Then was he wile of three pavilions
 rear'd
 Above the bushes, golden perlit in one,
 Red after revel, droned her lurdane knights
 Slumbeiring, and then three squires across their feet
 In one, their malice on the phaid lip
 Froz'n by sweet sleep, four of her damsels lay
 And in the thud, the circlet of the jousts
 Bound on her brow, were Gawain and Ettarre
 Bick, as a hand that pushes thio' the leaf
 To find a nest and feels a snake, he drew back, as a coward slinks from what he sees
 To cope with, or a traitor proven, or hound

Berten, did Pelleas in an utter shame Creep with his shadow thio' the court again,
 Fingering at his sword-handle until he stood
 There on the castle-bridge once more, and thought,
 'I will go back, and slay them where they lie'
 And so went back, and seeing them yet in sleep Said, 'Ye, that so dishallow the holy sleep,
 Your sleep is death,' and drew the sword, and thought,
 'What! slay a sleeping knight? the King hath bound
 And sworn me to this brotherhood,' again,
 'Alas that ever a knight should be so false'
 Then turn'd, and so return'd, and groaning laid
 The naked sword athwart their naked throats,
 There left it, and them sleeping, and she lay,
 The circlet of the tourney round her brows,
 And the sword of the tourney across her throat
 And forth he past, and mounting on his horse
 Stared at her towers that, larger than themselves
 In their own darkness, throng'd into the moon
 Then crush'd the saddle with his thighs, and clench'd
 His hands, and madden'd with himself and moan'd
 'Would they have risen against me in their blood
 At the last day? I might have answer'd them
 Even before high God O towers so strong,

Huge, solid, would that even while I give
The crack of earthquake shivering to your
base
Split you, and Hell burst up your harlot
roofs
Bellowing, and charr'd you thio' and thro'
within,
Black as the harlot's heart—hollow as a
skull !
Let the fierce east scream thio' your eye
let holes,
And whirl the dust of harlots round and
round
In dung and nettles ' hiss, snake—I saw
him there—
Let the fox bark, let the wolf yell Who
yells
Here in the still sweet summer night, but
I—
I, the poor Pelleas whom she call'd her
fool ?
Fool, beast—he, she, or I ? myself most
fool ,
Beast too, as lacking human wit—dis-
graced,
Dishonour'd all for trial of true love—
Love?—we be all alike only the King
Hath made us fools and liars O noble
vows !

O great and sane and simple race of brutes
That own no lust because they have no
law !
For why should I have loved her to my
shame ?
I loathe her, as I loved her to my shume
I never loved her, I but lusted for her—
Away—'

He dash'd the rowel into his horse,
And bounded forth and vanish'd thio' the
night

Then she, that felt the cold touch on
her throat,
Awaking knew the sword, and turn'd
himself
To Gawain 'Liar, for thou hast not slain
This Pelleas' here he stood, and might
have slain
Meand thyself ' And he that tells the tale

Says that her ever veening fancy turn'd
To Pelleas, as the one true knight on
earth,
And only lover, and thro' her love her
life
Wasted and pined, desiring him in vain
But he by wild and way, for half the
night,
And over hard and soft, striking the sod
From out the soft, the spark from off the
hard,
Rode till the star above the wakening sun,
Beside that tower where Peircivale was
cowl'd,
Glanced from the rosy forehead of the
dawn
For so the words were flash'd into his
heart
He knew not whence or wherfore 'O
sweet star,
Pure on the virgin forehead of the dawn !'
And there he would have wept, but felt
his eyes
Harder and drier than a fountain bed
In summer thither came the village girls
And linger'd talking, and they come no
more
Till the sweet heavens have fill'd it from
the heights
Again with living waters in the change
Of seasons hard his eyes, harder his
heart
Seem'd, but so weary were his limbs,
that he,
Gasp'd, 'Of Arthur's hall am I, but here,
Here let me rest and die,' cast himself
down,
And guldf'd his griefs in inmost sleep, so
lay,
Till shaken by a dream, that Gawain fired
The hill of Merlin, and the moaning stu
Reel'd in the smoke, brake into flame,
and fell
He woke, and being ware of some one
nigh,
Sent hands upon him, as to ten him,
crying,
'False' and I held thee pure as Guinevere '

But Peivcivale stood neir him and replied,
 ‘Am I but false as Guinevere is pure?
 Or art thou mazed with dreams? or being one
 Of our free-spoken Table hast not heuid
 That Lancelot’—there he check’d him self and paused

Then faied it with Sir Pelleas as with one
 Who gets i wound in battle, and the sword
 That made it plunges thro’ the wound again,
 And pricks it deeper and he shrank and wail’d,
 ‘Is the Queen false?’ and Peivcivale was mute
 ‘Have any of our Round Table held then vows?’
 And Peivcivale made unswei not a word
 ‘Is the King true?’ ‘The King!’ said Peivcivale
 ‘Why then let men couple at once with wolves
 What! art thou mad?’

But Pelleas, leaping up,
 Ran thro’ the doors and vaulted on his horse
 And fled small pity upon his horse had he,
 Or on himself, or any, and when he met
 A cripple, onc that hold a hand for ulms—
 Hunch’d as he was, and like an old dwarf elm
 That turns its back on the salt blast, the boy
 Paused not, but overide him, shouting,
 ‘False,
 And false with Gawain!’ and so left him bruised
 And batter’d, and fled on, and hill and wood
 Went ever streining by him till the gloom,
 That follows on the turning of the world,
 Dukn’d the common path he twich’d the reins,
 And made his beast that better knew it, swerve

Now off it and now on, but when he saw High up in heaven the hall that Merlin built,
 Blackening against the dead green stripes of even,
 ‘Black nest of rats,’ he groan’d, ‘ye build too high’

Not long thereafter from the city gates Issued Sir Lancelot riding airily, Wurm with a gracious parting from the Queen,
 Peace at his heart, and gazing at a stu And marvelling wht it was on whom the boy,
 Across the silent seeded meadow grass Boine, clash’d and Lancelot, saying, ‘What name hast thou That idest here so blindly and so huid?’
 ‘I have no name,’ he shouted, ‘i scouge am I, To lish the treasons of the Table Round ’
 ‘Yer, but thy name?’ ‘I have many names,’ he cried
 ‘I am wiath and shame and hate and evil fame,
 And like a poisonous wind I pass to blst
 And blaze the crime of Lancelot and the Queen ’
 ‘First over me,’ said Lancelot, ‘shalt thou pass?’
 ‘Fight therefore,’ yell’d the other, and either knight Diew back a space, and when they closed, at once
 The weuy steed of Pelleas floundering flung
 His rider, who call’d out from the duk field,
 ‘Thou art false as Hell slay me I have no sword ’
 Then Lancelot, ‘Yer, between thy lips— and shup ,
 But here will I disedge it by thy death ’
 ‘Sly then,’ he shriek’d, ‘my will is to be slun,’
 And Lancelot, with his heel upon the fall’n,

Rolling his eyes, a moment stood, then
spake
'Rise, weakling, I am Lancelot, say thy
say'

And Lancelot slowly rode his warhorse
back
To Camelot, and Sir Pelleas in brief while
Caught his unbroken limbs from the dark
field,
And follow'd to the city It chanced that
both
Brake into hall together, worn and pale
There with her knights and dames was
Guinevere
Full wonderingly she gazed on Lancelot
So soon return'd, and then on Pelleas,
him
Who had not greeted her, but cast him-
self
Down on a bench, hard breathing 'Have
ye fought?'
She ask'd of Lancelot 'Ay, my Queen,'
he said
'And thou hast overthrown him?' 'Ay,
my Queen'
Then she, turning to Pelleas, 'O young
knight,
Hath the great heart of knighthood in
thee fail'd
So far thou canst not bide, unfrowardly,
A fall from him?' Then, for he answer'd
not,
'Oi hast thou other griefs? If I, the
Queen,
May help them, loose thy tongue, and let
me know'
But Pelleas lifted up an eye so fierce
She qual'd, and he, hissing 'I have no
sword,'
Sprang from the door into the dark
The Queen
Look'd hard upon her lover, he on hei,
And each foresaw the dolorous day to
be
And all talk died, as in a grove all song
Beneath the shadow of some bird of prey,
Then a long silence came upon the hall,
And Modred thought, 'The time is hard
at hand'

THE LAST TOURNAMENT

DAGONET, the fool, whom Gawain in his
mood
Had made mock knight of Aithur's Table
Round,
At Camelot, high above the yellowing
woods,
Danced like a wither'd leaf before the hall
And toward him from the hall, with harp
in hand,
And from the crown thereof a carcanet
Of ruby swaying to and fro, the prize
Of Tristram in the jousts of yesterday,
Came Tristram, saying, 'Why skip ye
so, Sir Fool?'

For Aithur and Sir Lancelot riding once
Far down beneath a winding wall of rock
Heard a child wail A stump of oak
half dead,
From roots like some black coil of carven
snakes,
Clutch'd at the crag, and started thio'
mid air
Bearing an eagle's nest and thro' the tree
Rush'd ever a rainy wind, and thro' the
wind
Pieced ever a child's cry and clog and
tree
Scaling, Sir Lancelot from the perilous
nest,
This ruby necklace thrice around hei neck,
And all unscari'd from beak or talon,
brought
A maiden babe, which Aithur pityng
took,
Then gave it to his Queen to rear the
Queen
But coldly acquiescing, in hei white arms
Received, and after loved it tenderly,
And named it Nestling, so forgot herself
A moment, and her cares, till that young
life
Being smitten in mid heaven with mortal
cold
Past from hei, and in time the carcanet
Vext her with plaintive memories of the
child

So she, delivering it to Arthur, said,
 'Take thou the jewels of this dead in
 nocence,
 And make them, an thou wilst, a tourney-
 prize'

To whom the King, 'Peace to thine
 eagle boine
 Dead nestling, and this honour after
 death,
 Following thy will! but, O my Queen,
 I muse
 Why ye not wear on arm, or neck, or
 zone
 Those diamonds that I rescued from the
 tarn,
 And Lancelot won, methought, for thee
 to wear'

'Would rather you had let them fall,'
 she cried,
 'Plunge and be lost—ill fated as they
 were,
 A bitterness to me!'—ye look amazed,
 Not knowing they were lost as soon as
 given—
 Slid from my hands, when I was leaning
 out
 Above the river—that unhappy child
 Past in her barge—but losier luck will go
 With these rich jewels, seeing that they
 came
 Not from the skeleton of a brother-slayer,
 But the sweet body of a maiden babe
 Perchance—who knows?—the pupest of
 thy knights
 May win them for the pupest of my maids.'

She ended, and the cry of a great jousts
 With trumpet blowing, ran on all the
 ways
 From Cunclot in among the faded fields
 To furthest towers, and everywhere the
 knights
 Arm'd for a day of glory before the King

But on the hither side of that loud morn
 Into the hall stagger'd, his visage rabb'd
 From ear to ear with dogwhip weals, his
 nose

Bruise bioken, one eye out, and one hand
 off,
 And one with shatter'd fingers dangling
 lame,
 A churl, to whom indignantly the King,

'My churl, for whom Christ died, what
 evil beast
 Hath drawn his claws athwart thy face?
 or fiend?
 Man was it who marred heaven's image
 in thee thus?'

Then, sputtering thro' the hedge of
 splinter'd teeth,
 Yet strangers to the tongue, and with
 blunt stump
 Pitch-blacken'd sawing the air, said the
 maim'd churl,

'He took them and he drove them to
 his tower—
 Some hold he was a noble knight of thine—
 A hundred goodly ones—the Red Knight,
 he—
 Lord, I was tending swine, and the Red
 Knight
 Brikke upon me and drove them to his
 tower,
 And when I call'd upon thy name as one
 That doest right by gentle and by churl,
 Maim'd me and maul'd, and would out-
 right have slain,
 Save that he sware me to a message,
 saying,

"Tell thou the King and all his heirs, that I
 Have founded my Round Table in the
 North,
 And whatsoever his own knights have
 sworn
 My knights have sworn the contrary
 to it—and say
 My tower is full of harlots, like his court,
 But mine are worthier, seeing they profess
 To be none other than themselves—and say
 My knights are all adulterers like his own,
 But mine are truer, seeing they profess
 To be none other, and say his hour is come,
 The heathen are upon him, his long lance
 Bioken, and his Excalibur a straw!"

Then Arthur turn'd to Kay the seneschal,
 'Take thou my churl, and tend him curiously
 Like a king's heir, till all his hurts be whole
 The heathen—but that ever climbing wave,
 Hurl'd back again so often in empty form,
 Hath lain for yeus at rest—and renegades,
 Thieves, bandits, leavings of confusion,
 whom
 The wholesome realm is purged of otherwhere,
 Friends, thro' your manhood and your fealty,—now
 Make their last head like Satan in the North
 My younger knights, new-made, in whom your flower
 Waits to be solid fruit of golden deeds,
 Move with me toward then quelling, which achieved,
 The loneliest ways are safe from shore to shore
 But thou, Sir Lancelot, sitting in my place
 Enchur'd to-morrow, subtilte the field,
 For wheresoe shouldst thou come to mingle with it,
 Only to yeld my Queen her own again?
 Speak, Lancelot, thou art silent—is it well?

Theireto Sir Lancelot answer'd, 'It is well'

Yet better if the King abide, and leave
 The leading of his younger knights to me
 Else, for the King has will'd it, it is well'

Then Arthur rose and Lancelot follow'd him,
 And while they stood without the doo's, the King
 Turn'd to him saying, 'Is it then so well?
 Or mine the blame that oft I seem as he
 Of whom was written, "A sound is in his ears"?'
 The foot that loiteris, bidden go,—the glance
 That only seems half loyal to command,—

A minnei somewhat fallen from reverence—
 Or have I dream'd the bearing of our knights
 Tells of a manhood ever less and lower?
 Or whence the few lest this my realm, upreai'd,
 By noble deeds at one with noble vows,
 From flat confusion and brute violences,
 Reel back into the beast, and be no more?'

He spoke, and taking all his younger knights,
 Down the slope city rode, and shuply turn'd
 North by the gite In her high bower
 the Queen,
 Working a tapestry, lifted up her head,
 Wtch'd her lord pass, and knew not that she sigh'd
 Then ran across her memory the strange rhyme
 Of bygone Merlin, 'Where is he who knows?
 From the great deep to the great deep he goes'

But when the morning of a tournament,
 By these in earnest those in mockery call'd
 The Tournament of the Dead Innocence,
 Brake with a wet wind blowing, I meclot,
 Round whose sick head all night, like birds of prey,
 The words of Arthur flying shuck'd, rose
 And down a streetwiy hung with folds of pure
 White samite, and by fountains running wine,
 Where childien sat in white with cups of gold,
 Moved to the lists, and there, with slow
 and steps
 Ascending, fill'd his double diagonal chair

He glanced and saw the stately galleries,
 Dame, damsel, each thro' worship of their Queen
 White robed in honour of the stainless child,

And some w^th scatter'd jewels, like a
bank
Of maiden snow mingled with sparks of
fire
He look'd but once, and vail'd his eyes
again

The sudden trumpet sounded as in a
dream
To eais but half-awaked, then one low roll
Of Autumn thunder, and the jousts began
And ever the wind blew, and yellowing leaf
And gloom and gleam, and shower and
shorn plume
Went down it Sighing wearily, as one
Who sits and gazes on a faded fire,
When all the goodlier guests were past away,
Sat their great umpire, looking o'er the
lists

He saw the laws that ruled the tournament
Broken, but spoke not, once, a knight
cast down
Before his thone of arbitration cursed
The dead bane and the follies of the King,
And once the lucs of a helmet crack'd,
And show'd him, like a vermin in its hole,
Modred, a narrow free man he heard
The voice that billow'd round the banners
rou

An ocean sounding welcome to one knight,
But newly enter'd, taller than the rest,
And armou'd all in forest green, whercon
Thair tript a hundred tiny silver deer,
And wearing but a holly sprig for crest,
With ever scattering berries, and on shield
A spear, a harp, a bugle—Tristram—late
From overseas in Brittany return'd,
And marvelling with a princess of that realm,
Isolt the White—Sir Tristram of the
Woods—
Whom Lancelot knew, had held sometime
with pun
His own against him, and now yearn'd to
shake
The butthen off his heart in one full shock
With Tristram ev'n to death his strong
hands gript
And dintered the gilt dragon, right and left,
Until he groan'd for wrath—so many of
those,

That wate their ladies' colours on the
casque,
Drew from before Sir Tristram to the
bounds,
And there with gibes and flickering
mockeries
Stood, while he mutter'd, ‘Chaven crests !
O shame !
What sin have these in whom they sware
to love ?
The glory of our Round Table is no more !

So Tristram won, and Lancelot gave,
the gems,
Not speaking other word than ‘Hast thou
won ?
Art thou the pupest, brother ? See, the hand
Wherewith thou takest this, is red !’ to
whom
Tristram, half plagued by Lancelot's
linguorous mood,
Made answer, ‘Ay, but wherefore toss
me this
Like a dry bone cast to some hungry hound ?
Let be thy fair Queen's fantasy Strength
of heart
And might of limb, but unuse and skill,
Are winners in this pastime of our King
My hand—belike the lance hath drupt
upon it—
No blood of mine, I trow, but O chief
knight,
Right arm of Arthur in the battlefield,
Great brother, thou nor I have made the
world,
Be happy in thy fair Queen as I in mine

And Tristram round the gallery made
his house
Carcole, then bow'd his homage, bluntly
saying,
‘Fair damsels, each to him who worships
each
Sole Queen of Beauty and of love, behold
I has dry my Queen of Beauty is not here !
And most of these were mute, some anger'd,
one
Murmuring, ‘All courtesy is dead,’ and
one,
‘The glory of our Round Table is no more !’

Then fell thick rain, plume droopt and mantle clung,
And pettish cries awoke, and the wan day Went glooming down in wet and weal-ness
But under her black brows a swarthy one I laugh'd shrilly, crying, 'Praise the patient saints,
Our one white day of Innocence hath past, Tho' somewhat draggled at the skirt So be it
The snowdrop only, flowering thro' the year, Would make the world as blank as Winter tide
Come—let us gladden then sad eyes, our Queen's
And Lancelot's, at this night's solemnity With all the kindlier colours of the field '
So dame and damsel glitter'd at the feast
Various gay for he that tells the tale Liken'd them, saying, as when an hour of cold Falls on the mountun in midsummer snows,
And all the purple slopes of mountun flowers Pass under white, till the wum hour returns
With veer of wind, and all are flowers again,
So dame and damsel cast the simplewhite, And glowing in all colours, the live grass, Rose campion, bluebell, kingcup, poppy, glanced
About the revels, and with mirth so loud Beyond all use, that, half amazed, the Queen,
And wroth at Tristram and the lawless jousts,
Broke up their sports, then slowly to her bower
Painted, and in her bosom pain was lord
And little Dagonet on the morrow morn,
High over all the yellowing Autumn-tide, Danced like a wither'd leaf before the hill

Then Tristram saying, 'Why skip ye so, Sir Fool?'
Wheel'd round on either heel, Dagonet replied,
'Belike for lack of wiser company, Or being fool, and seeing too much wit Makes the wold rotten, why, belike I skip To know myself the wisest knight of all,'
'Ay, fool,' said Tristram, 'but 'tis eating dry
To dance without a catch, a roundelay To dance to' Then he twangled on his harp,
And while he twangled little Dagonet stood Quiet as any water sodden log Stay'd in the wandering warble of a brook, But when the twangling ended, skipt again, And being ask'd, 'Why skipt ye not, Sir Fool?'
Made answer, 'I had hefer twenty years Skip to the broken music of my brains Than any broken music thou canst make,' Then Tristram, waiting for the quip to come,
'Good now, what music have I broken, fool?'
And little Dagonet, skipping, 'Aithui, the King's,
For when thou playest that an with Queen Isolt,
Thou makest broken music with thy bude, Her duntiel namesake down in Brittany— And so thou breakest Arthur's music too,'
'Save for that broken music in thy brains, Sir fool,' said Tristram, 'I would break thy head
Fool, I came late, the heathen wars were o'er,
The life had flown, we sware but by the shell—
I am but a fool to reason with a fool— Come, thou art ciabb'd and sour but lean me down,
Sir Dagonet, one of thy long asses' eais, And harken if my music be not true
‘“Free love—free field—we love but while we may
The woods are hush'd, their music is no more

The leaf is dead, the yearning past away
New leaf, new life—the days of frost are
o'er

New life, new love, to suit the newer day
New loves are sweet as those that went
before
Free love—free field—we love but while
we may "

'Ye might have moved slow-measure
to my tune,
Not stood stockstill I made it in the
woods,

And heard it ring as true as tested gold '

But Dagonet with one foot poised in
his hand,

'Friend, did ye mark that fountain
yesterday

Made to run wine?—but this had run
itself

All out like a long life to a soul end—
And them that round it sat with golden
cups

To hand the wine to whosoever came—
The twelve small damosels white as

Innocence,

In honour of poor Innocence the babe,
Who left the gems which Innocence the
Queen

Lent to the King, and Innocence the King
Gave for a prize—and one of those white
slips

Handed her cup and piped, the pretty one,
"Drink, drink, Sir Fool," and therupon

I drank,

Spat—pish—the cup was gold, the
draught was mud '

And Tristram, 'Was it muddier than
thy giles?

Is all the laughter gone dead out of thee?—
Not marking how the knighthood mock
thee, fool—

"Fear God honour the King—his one
true knight—

Sole follower of the vows"—so here be
they

Who knew thee swine now before I came,
Smutten thin blisted grun but when
the King

Had made thee fool, thy vanity so shot up
It frightened all free fool from out thy heart,
Which left thee less than fool, and less
than swine,

A naked rught—yet swine I hold theestill,
For I have flung thee pearls and fnd thee
swine '

And little Dagonet mincing with his feet,
'Knight, an ye fling those rubies round
my neck

In lieu of heirs, I'll hold thou hast some
touch

Of music, since I care not for thy pearls
Swine? I have wallow'd, I have wash'd
—the world

Is flesh and shadow—I have had my day
The dirty nurse, Experience, in her kind
Hath foul'd me—an I wallow'd, then I
wash'd—

I have had my dry and my philosophies—
And thank the Lord I am King Arthur's
fool

Swine, say ye? swine, goats, asses, rams
and geese

Troop'd round a Pynym huper once,
who thumm'd

On such a wine as musically as thou
Some such fine song—but never a king's
fool'

And Tristram, 'Then were swine,
goats, asses, geese

The wiser fools, seeing thy Pynym bud
Had such a mystery of his mystery
That he could hup his wife up out of hell '

Then Dagonet, turning on the ball of
his foot,

'And whither hup'st thou thine? down'
and thyself

Down! and two more a helpful huper
thou,

Thut hupest downward! Dost thou know
the sti

We call the harp of Arthur up in heaven?

And Tristram, 'Ay, Sir Fool, for when
our King

Was victor wellnigh day by day the
knights,

Glorying in each new glory, set his name
High on all hills, and in the signs of
heaven'

And Dagonet answer'd, 'Ay, and when
the land
Was freed, and the Queen false, ye set
yourself
To babble 'bout him, all to show your
wit—

And whether he were King by courtesy,
Or King by right—and so went halping
down
The black king's highway, got so far, and
grew
So witty that ye play'd at ducks and
drakes
With Aithur's vows on the great lake of
fire
Tuwhoo! do ye see it? do ye see the
star?

'Nay, fool,' said Tuistram, 'not in
open day'
And Dagonet, 'Nay, nor will I see it
and hear
It makes a silent music up in heaven,
And I, and Aithur and the angels hear,
And then we skip' 'Lo, fool,' he said,
'ye talk
Fool's treason is the King thy brother
fool?'
Then little Dagonet clapt his hands and
shuill'd,
'Ay, ay, my brother fool, the king of
fools'

Conceits himself as God that he can make
Figs out of thistles, silk from bustles, milk
From burning spurge, honey from hornet
combs,
And men from beasts—Long live the king
of fools!'

And down the city Dagonet danced
away,
But thro' the slowly-mellowing avenues
And solitary passes of the wood
Rode Tuistram toward Lyonesse and
the west
Before him fled the face of Queen Isolt
With ruby circled neck, but evermore

Past, as a rustle or twitter in the wood
Made dull his inner, keen his outer eye
For all that walk'd, or crept, or perch'd,
or flew
Anon the face, as, when a gust hath
blown,
Unruffling waters re collect the shape
Of one that in them sees himself, return'd,
But at the slot or fewmets of a deer,
Or ev'n a fall'n feather, vanish'd again

So on for all that dry from lawn to lawn
Thro' many a league long bower he rode
At length
A lodge of intertwined beechen boughs
Fuize cramm'd, and bracken roost, the
which himself
Built for a summer day with Queen Isolt
Agunst a shower, dark in the golden
grove
Appearing, sent his fancy back to where
She lived a moon in that low lodge with
him
Till Mark her lord had past, the Cornish
King,
With six or seven, when Tuistram was
away,
And snatch'd her thence, yet dierding
worse than shame
Her wario Tuistram, spoke not any
word,
But bode his hou, devising wretchedness

And now that desert lodge to Tuistram
lookt
So sweet, that halting, in he past, and
sink
Down on a drift of foliage random blown,
But could not rest for musing how to
smoothe
And sleek his mariage over to the Queen
Perchance in lone Tintagil f'r from all
The tonguesteis of the court she had not
heard
But then what folly had sent him oversais
After she left him lonely here? a name?
Was it the name of one in Brittany,
Isolt, the daughter of the King? 'Isolt
Of the white hounds' they call'd her the
sweet name

Allured him first, and then the maid her self,
Who served him well with those white hands of hers,
And loved him well, until himself had thought

He loved her also, wedded easily,
But left her ill as easily, and return'd
The black-blue Irish hair and Irish eyes
Had drawn him home—what marvel?
Then he lvd
His brows upon the drifted leaf and dream'd

He seem'd to pace the strand of Brittany
Between Isolt of Britain and his bride,
And show'd them both the ruby chain,
and both

Began to struggle for it, till his Queen
Graspt it so hard, that all her hand wised
Then cried the Briton, 'Look, her hand
is red!'

These be no rubies, this is frozen blood,
And melts wth in her hand—her hand is hot

With ill desnes, but this I gave thee look,
Is all as cool and white as any flower!
Follow'd a rush of eagle's wings, and then
A whimping of the spirit of the child,
Because the tyr' m had spoild her cou
cmet

He dream'd, but Arthur with a hum
died spirns

Rode fast, till o'er the illimitable ice,
And many a glancing plash and sallowy
isle,

The wide wing'd sunset of the misty marsh
Glared on a huge marshcolited town
That stood with open doors, whereout
was roll'd

A roa of rot, as from men secur
Amid their marshes, rustans at their ease
Among their brat-lordes, an evil song
'Lo there,' said one of Arthur's youth,
for their,

High on a grim dead tree before the tower,
A goodly brother of the Table Round
Swung by the neck and on the boughs
a shield

Showing a shower of blood in a field noir,
And therbeside a horn, inflamed the
knights

At that dishonour done the gilded spm,
Till each would clash the shuld, and blow
the horn

But Arthur wived them back Alone he rode

Then at the dry harsh roar of the great
horn,

That sent the face of all the marsh aloft
An ever upward-rushing storm and cloud
Of shneik and plume, the Red Knight
head, and all,

Even to tipmost lance and topmost helm,
In blood red armour sallying, howld to
the King,

'The teeth of Hell flay bare and gnash
thee flat!—

Lo! art thou not that eunuch hearted
King

Who fam hid clipt free manhood from
the wold—

The woman-worshipper? Yea, God's
curse, and I!

Slum ws the brother of my paramour
By a knight of thine, and I that heard
her whine

And snivel, being eunuch-hearted too,
Swore by the scorpion worm that twists
in hell,

And stings itself to everlasting death,
To hang whatever knight of thine I fought
And tumbled Ait thou King?—Look
to thy hsc!'

He ended Arthur knew the voice, the
face

Wellnigh ws helmet-hidden, and the
name

Went wandering somewhere drakling in
his mind

And Arthur deign'd not use of word or
word,

But let the drunkard, as he stretch'd from
horse

To strike him, overbalancing his bulk,
Down from the crusewry heavily to the
swamp

Fall, as the crest of some slow aching wave,
Heard in dead night along that table-shore,
Drops flat, and after the great waters break
Whitening for half a league, and thin themselves,
Far over sands marbled with moon and cloud,
From less and less to nothing, thus he fell
Head heavy, then the knights, who watch'd him, roar'd
And shouted and leapt down upon the fall'n,
There trampled out his face from being known,
And sank his head in mire, and slimed themselves
Nor heaid the King for their own cries, but sprang
Thio' open doois, and swoirding right and left
Men, women, on their sodden faces, huil'd
The tables over and the wines, and slew
Till all the rafters rang with woman yell,
And all the pavement strem'd with massacre
Then, yell with yell echoing, they fued the tower,
Which half that autumn night, like the live North,
Red pulsing up thio' Alloth and Alcoi,
Made all above it, and a hundred meies
About it, as the water Monb saw
Come round by the East, and out beyond them flush'd
The long low dune, and lazy-plunging sea

So all the ways were safe from shore to shore,
But in the heart of Arthur pain was lord
Then, out of Tristram walking, the red dream
Fled with a shout, and that low lodge return'd,
Mid-forest, and the wind among the boughs

He whistled his good waioise left to graze
Among the forestgreens, vaulted upon him,
And rode beneath in ever showering leaf,
Till one lone woman, weeping near a cross,
Stay'd him 'Why weep ye?' 'Lord,' she said, 'my man
Hath left me or is dead,' whereon he thought—
'What, if she hate me now? I would not this
What, if she love me still? I would not that
I know not what I would—but sud to her,
'Yet weep not thou, lest, if thy mate return,
He find thy favou chnged and love thee not'
Then pressing day by day thio' Lyonesse
List in a roky hollow, belling, heard
The hounds of Mark, and felt the goodly hounds
Yelp at his heart, but turning, past and gun'd
Tintagil, half in sea, and high on land,
A crown of towers

Down in a crusement sat,
A low sea sunset glowering round her han
And glossy throated grace, Isolt the Queen
And whcn she heud the feet of Tristram gund
The spiring stone that scaled about her tower,
Flush'd, staited, met him at the doois, and there
Belted his body with her white embrase,
Crying aloud, 'Not Mulk—not Mulk, my soul'
The footstep flutter'd me at first not he
Catlike thro' his own castle steals my Mark,
But warrior wise thou sturdest thio' his halls
Who hates thee, as I him—ev'n to the death
My soul, I felt my hatied for my Maik

Quicken within me, and knew that thou
weit nigh,
To whom Sir Tristram smiling, 'I am
here
Let be thy Mark, seeing he is not thine'

And drawing somewhat backward she
replied,
'Can he be wrong'd who is not ev'n his
own,
But save for dread of thee had beaten me,
Scratch'd, bitten, blinded, mair'd me
somehow—Muk?'

What rights are his that dare not strike
for them?
Not lift a hand—not, tho' he found me
thus!
But harken! have ye met him? hence he
went
To day for three days' hunting—as he
said—

And so returns belike within an hour
Muk's way, my soul!—but eat not thou
with Muk,
Because he hates thee even more than
fens,
Nor drink and when thou passest any
wood

Close vizor, lest an arrow from the bush
Should leave me all alone with Muk and
hell

My God, the measure of my hate for
Muk
Is the measure of my love for thee'

So, pluck'd one way by hate and one
by love,
Drun'd of her force, ignam she sit, and
spake
To Tristram, as he knelt before her,
saying,
'O hunter, and O blower of the horn,
Huper, and thou hast been a rover too,
For, ere I waited with my shambling king,
Ye twain had fallen out about the budge
Of one—his name is out of me—the prize,
If pure she were—(what mervel—she
could see)—

Thine, friend, and ever since my craven
seeks

To wrek thee villainously but, O Sir
Knight,
What dame or damsel have ye kneel'd to
list?'

And Tristram, 'Last to my Queen
Paramount,
Here now to my Queen Paramount of love
And loveliness—ay, lovelier than when
fist
Her light feet fell on our rough Lyonesse,
Sailing from Ierland'

Softly laugh'd Isolt,
'Flitter me not, for hath not our great
Queen
My dole of beauty trebled?' and he said,
'Her beauty is her beauty, and thine
thine,
And thine is more to me—soft, gracious,
kind—
Save when thy Mark is kindled on thy lips
Most gracious, but she, haughty, ev'n to
him,
Lancelot, for I have seen him wan enow
To make one doubt if ever the great Queen
Hwe yielded him her love'

To whom Isolt,
'Ah then, false hunter and false harper,
thou
Who brkest thro' the scuple of my
bond,
Calling me thy white hind, and saying
to me
That Guinevere had sinn'd against the
highest,
And I—misyoked with such a want of
man—
That I could hardly sin against the lowest'

He answer'd, 'O my soul, be com
forted'
If this be sweet, to sin in leading strings,
If here be comfort, and if ours be sin,
Crown'd warrant hid we for the crowning
sin
That made us happy but how ye greet
me—fear
And fruit and doubt—no word of that
lond tale—

Thy deep heart-yearnings, thy sweet
memories
Of Tristram in that year he was away'

And, saddening on the sudden, spake
Isolt,
'I had forgotten all in my strong joy
To see thee—yearnings?—ay! fo! hour
by hour,

Here in the never ended afternoon,
O sweeter than all memories of thee,
Deeper than any yearnings after thee
Seem'd those far rolling, westward
smiling seas,

Watch'd from this tower Isolt of Britain
dash'd

Before Isolt of Brittany on the strand,
Would that have chill'd her bride-kiss?
Wedded her?

Fought in her father's battles? wounded
there?

The King was all fulfill'd with grateful
ness,

And she, my namesake of the hands, that
heal'd

Thy hurt and heat with unguent and
caress—

Well—can I wish her any huger wrong
Than having known thee? her too hast
thou left

To pine and waste in those sweet
memories

O were I not my Mark's, by whom all
men

Ae noble, I should hate thee more than
love'

And Tristram, fondling her light hands,
replied,
'Grace, Queen, for being loved she
loved me well

Did I love her? the name at least I loved
Isolt?—I fought his battles, for Isolt!
The night was dark, the true star set
Isolt!

The name was ruler of the dark—Isolt?
Care not for her! patient, and prayerful,
meek,
Pale-blooded, she will yield herself to
God'

And Isolt answer'd, 'Yea, and why
not I?

Mine is the larger need, who am not meek,
Pile-blooded, prayerful Let me tell
thee now

Here one black, mute midsummer night
I sat,
Lonely, but musing on thee, wondering
where,
Murmuring a light song I had heard thee
sing,

And once or twice I spoke thy name aloud
Then flash'd a levin bland, and near me
stood,

In fuming sulphur blue and green, a
fiend—

Muk's way to steal behind one in the
dark—

For there was Mark "He has wedded
her," he said,

Not said, but hiss'd it then this crown
of towers

So shook to such a rou of all the sky,
That here in utter dark I swoon'd away,
And woke again in utter dark, and cried,
"I will flee hence and give myself to
God"—

And thou went lying in thy new leman's
arms'

Then Tristram, ever dallying with her
hand,

'May God be with thee, sweet, when old
and gray,

And past desire!' a saying that anger'd
her

"May God be with thee, sweet, when
thou art old,

And sweet no more to me!" I need
Him now

For when had Lancelot utter'd aught so
gross

Ev'n to the swineherd's malkin in the
mast?

The greater man, the greater courtesy
Far other was the Tristram, Arthur's
knight!

But thou, thio' ever hunting thy wild
beasts—

Save that to touch a hair, tilt with a lance

Becomes thee well—art grown wild beast
thyself

How darest thou, if lover, push me even
In fancy from thy side, and set me fū
In the gray distance, half a life away,
Her to be loved no more? Unsay it,
unswear!

Flatter me rather, seeing me so weak,
Broken with Mirk and hate and solitude,
Thy marriage and mine own, that I
should suck

Lies like sweet wines lietome I believe
Will ye not lie? not swear, as thine ye
kneel,

And solemnly as when ye swore to him,
The man of men, our King—My God,
the power

Was once in vows when men believed the
King!

They lied not then, who swore, and thro'
their vows

The King prevulning made his realm —
I say,

Swear to me thou wilt love me ev'n when
old,
Giv' hund', and past desire, and in de
spur'

Then Tistram, pacing moodily up and
down,
'Vows! did you keep the vow you made
, to Mirk

More than I mine? Lied, say ye? Nay,
but leant,
The vow that binds too strictly snaps
itself—

My knighthood taught me this—ry, being
snapt—

We run more counter to the soul thereof
Than had we never sworn I swear no
more

I swoe to the great King, and am for
sworn
For once—ev'n to the height—I honour'd
him

"Man, is he man at all?" methought,
when first

I rode from our rough Lyonesse, and
bchld

That victor of the Pagan throned in hall—

His hair, a sun that ry'd from off a brow
Like hillsnow high in heaven, the steel
blue eyes,

The golden beard that clothed his lips
with light—

Moreover, that wend legend of his birth,
With Merlin's mystic babble about his end
Amazed me, then, his foot was on a stool
Shaped as a dragon, he seem'd to me no
man,

But Michael trampling Satan, so I sware,
Being amazed but this went by—The
vows!

O ry—the wholesome madness of an
hour—

They serv'd their use, then time, for
every knight

Believed himself a greater than himself,
and every follower eyed him as a God;
Ill he, being lifted up beyond himself,
Did mightier deeds than elsewhere he had
done,

And so the realm was made, but then
their vows—

First mainly thro' that sallying of our
Queen—

Began to gall the knighthood, asking
whence

If Aithui right to bind them to himself?
Dropt down from heaven? wrsh'd up
from out the deep?

They ful'd to trace him thro' the flesh
and blood

Of our old kings whence then? a doubt
ful lord

To bind them by inviolable vows,
Which flesh and blood perforce would
violate

For feel this um of mine—the tide within
Red with free chase and heathw-scented
air,

Pulsing full man, can Arthur make me
pure

As my morden child? lock up my tongu
From uttering freely whut I fraly heu?
Bind me to one? The wide world
laughs at it

And worldling of the world am I, and
know

The plimigan that whitens eie his hour

Wooes his own end, we are not angels here
Nor shall be vows—I am woodman of
the woods,

And hear the garnet headed yifflingale
Mock them my soul, we love but while
we may,
And therefore is my love so huge for thee,
Seeing it is not bounded save by love'

Here ending, he moved toward her,
and she said,
'Good an I turn'd iwy my love for thee
To some one thrice as courteous as thyself—

For courtesy wins woman ill as well
As valour may, but he that closes both
Is perfect, he is Lancelot—truer indeed,
Rosier and comelier, thou—but say I loved
This knighthiest of all knights, and cast
thee back
Thine own small sw, "We love but
while we may,"
Well then, what answer?"

He that while she spake,
Mindful of what he brought to adorn her
with,
The jewels, had let one finger lightly touch
The warm white apple of her throat,
replied,
'Press this a little closer, sweet, until—
Come, I am hunger'd and half anger'd—
meat,
Wine, wine—and I will love thee to the
death,
And out beyond into the dream to come'

So then, when both were brought to
full accord,
She rose, and set before him all he will'd,
And after these had comforted the blood
With meats and wines, and stiated their
hearts—

Now talking of their woodland paradise,
The deer, the dews, the fern, the founts,
the lawns,
Now mocking at the much ungainliness,
And craven shifts, and long crane legs of
Mark—

Then Tristram laughing caught the harp,
and sang

Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that bend
the brier!

A star in heaven, a star within the mere!
Ay, ay, O ay—a star was my desire,
And one was far apart, and one was near
Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that bow the
glass!

And one was water and one star was fire,
And one will ever shine and one will pass
Ay, ay, O ay—the winds that move the
mere'

Then in the light's last glimmer Tris-
trum show'd

And swung the ruby cuanet She cried,
'The collar of some Order, which our
King

Hath newly founded, all for thee, my soul,
For thee, to yield thee grace beyond thy
peers'

'Not so, my Queen,' he said, 'but the
red fruit

Grown on a magic oak tree in mid heaven,
And won by Tristram is a tourney prize,
And hither brought by Tristram for his
last

Love offering and peace offering unto
thee'

He spoke, he turn'd, then, flinging
round her neck,
Claspt it, and cried 'Thine Order, O my
Queen'

But, while he bow'd to kiss the jewell'd
throat,
Out of the duk, just as the lips had
touch'd,
Behind him rose a shadow and a shiel—
'Mark's way,' said Mair, and clove him
tho' the brain

That night came Arthur home, and
while he climb'd,
All in a death-dumb autumn dripping
gloom,

The stairway to the hill, and look'd and
sw

The great Queen's bower was duk,—
about his feet
A voice clung sobbing till he question'd it,

'What art thou?' and the voice about his feet
Sent up an answer, sobbing, 'I am thy fool,
And I shall never make thee smile again.'

GUINEVRE

QUEEN GUINEVERE had fled the court, and sat
There in the holy house at Amesbury
Weeping, none with her save a little mud,
A novice one low light betwixt them buri'd
Blun'd by the creeping mist, for all abroad,
Beneath a moon unseen albeit it full,
The white mist, like a face cloth to the face,
Clung to the dead earth, and the land was still

For hitherto had she fled, her cause of flight
Sir Modred, he that like a subtle beast
Lay couchant with his eyes upon the throne,
Ready to spring, waiting a chance for this
He chill'd the popular prises of the King
With silent smiles of slow disprangement
And temp'red with the Lords of the White Horse,
Heathen, the brood by Hengist left, and sought

To make disruption in the Table Round
Of Arthur, and to splinter it into feuds
Serving his traitorous end, and all his aims
Were sharpened by strong hits for Lancelot

For thus it chanced one morn when all the court,
Green-suited, but with plumes that mock'd the may,
Had been, then went, a-maying and return'd,
That Modred still in green, all on end eye,

Climb'd to the high top of the garden wall
To spy some secret scandal if he might,
And saw the Queen who sat betwixt her best

Emid, and lissome Vivien, of her court
The wildest and the worst, and more than this

He saw not, for Sir Lancelot passing by
Spied where he couch'd, and as the gudener's hand

Picks from the colewoit a green caterpillar,

So from the high wall and the floweing grove

Of glasses Lancelot pluck'd him by the heel,

And cast him as a worm upon the way,
But when he knew the Prince tho' marri'd with dust,

He, reverencing king's blood in a bad man,
Made such excuses as he might, and these full lightly without scorn, for in those days

No knight of Arthur's noblest dealt in scorn,

But, if a man were holt or hunch'd, in him By those whom God had made full limb'd and tall,

Scorn was allow'd as proof of his defect,
And he w^s answer'd softly by the King
And all his Table So Sir Lancelot holp
To raise the Prince, who rising twice or thrice

Ful shaply smote his knees, and smiled, and went

But, ever after, the small violence done
Rankled in him and ruffled all his heart,
As the sharp wind that ruffles all dry long
A little bitter pool about a stonc

On the bare coast

But when Sir Lancelot told
This matter to the Queen, at first she laug'd

Lightly, to think of Modred's dusty fall,
Then shudder'd, as the village wife who cries

I shudder, some one steps across my grave,'

Then laugh'd again, but faintlier, for indeed

She half foresaw that he, the subtle beast,
Would track her guilt until he found, and hers

Would be for e've more a name of scorn
Henceforward rarely could she front in hall,

Or elsewhere, Modred's narrow foxy face,
Her hiding smile, and gray persistent eye

Henceforward too, the Powers that tend the soul,

To help it from the death that cannot die,
And save it even in extremes, begin

To vex and plague her Many a time for hours,

Beside the placid breathings of the King,
In the dead night, grim faces came and went

Before her, or a vague spiritual fear—
Like to some doubtful noise of creaking doors,

Heard by the witcher in a haunted house,
That keeps the rust of murder on the walls—

Held her awake or if she slept, she dream'd

An awful dream, for then she seem'd to stand

On some vast plain before a setting sun,
And from the sun there swiftly made it her
A ghastly something, and its shadow flew
Before it, till it touch'd her, and she turn'd—

When lo! her own, that broadening from her feet,

And blackening, swallow'd all the land,
and in it

Far cities burnt, and with a cry she woke
And all this trouble did not pass but giew,
Till ev'n the clear face of the guileless King,

And trustful courtesies of household life,
Became her bane, and at the last she said,

'O Lancelot, get thee hence to thine own land,

For if thou tarry we shall meet agen,
And if we meet again, some evil chance

Will make the smouldering scandal break
and blaze

Before the people, and our lord the King
And Lancelot ever promised, but ie main'd,

And still they met and met Again she said,

'O Lancelot, if thou love me get thee hence'

And then they were agreed upon a night
(When the good King should not be there)
to meet

And pair for ever Passion pale they met
And greced hands in hunds, and eye to eve,

Low on the bordei of her couch they sat
Stummering and staring it was then
last hour,

A madness of farewells And Modred brought

His creatures to the basement of the tower
For testimony, and crying with full voice
'Traitor, come out, ye are triapt at last,'
aoused

Lancelot, who iesching outward lionlike
Leapt on him, and huil'd him headlong,
and he fell

Stunn'd, and his creatures took and bue
him off,

And all ws still then she, 'The end is come,

And I am shamed for ever,' and he said,
'Mine be the shame, mine ws the sin
but nise,

And fly to my strong castle oversers
There will I hide thee, till my life shall end,

There hold thee with my life aginst the world'

She answer'd, 'Lancelot, wilt thou hold
me so?

Nay, friend, for we have taken our farewells

Would God that thou couldst hide me
from myself'

Mine is the shame, for I ws wife, and thou
Unwedded yet nise now, and let us fly,
For I will di w me into sanctuary,
And bide my doom' So Lancelot got
her hoise,

Set her thereon, and mounted on his own,
And then they rode to the divided way,
There kiss'd, and parted weeping for
 he past,
Love loyal to the least wish of the Queen,
Back to his land, but she to Almesbury
Fled all night long by glimmering waste
 and weald,
And heard the Spirits of the waste and
 weald
Moan as she fled, or thought she heard
 them morn
And in herself she morn'd 'Too late, too
 late'
Till in the cold wind that forewains the
 morn,
A blot in heaven, the Raven, flying high,
Croak'd, and she thought, 'He spies a
 field of death,
For now the Heathen of the Northern Sea,
Lured by the crimes and frailties of the
 court,
Begin to slay the folk, and spoil the land '

And when she came to Almesbury she
 spake
There to the nuns, and said, 'Mine
 enemies
Puis me, but, O peaceful Sisterhood,
Receive, and yield me sanctuary, nor ask
Her name to whom ye yield it, till her
 time
To tell you ' and her beauty, grace and
 pow'r,
Wrought as a charm upon them, and
 they spared
To ask it

So the stately Queen abode
For many a week, unknown, among the
 nuns,
Nor with them mix'd, nor told her name,
 nor sought,
Wipt in her grief, for housel or for
 shift,
But communed only with the little maid,
Who pleased her with a babbling heed
 lessness
Which often lured her from herself, but
 now,

This night, a rumour wildly blown about
Came, that Sir Modred had usurp'd the
 realm,
And leagued him with the heathen, while
 the King
Was waging war on Lancelot then she
thought,
'With what a hate the people and the
 King
Must hate me,' and bow'd down upon
 her hands
Silent, until the little maid, who brook'd
No silence, brake it, uttering 'Late' so
 late'
What hour, I wonder, now?' and when
 she drew
No answer, by and by began to hum
An air the nuns had taught her, 'Late,
 so late'
Which when she heard, the Queen look'd
 up, and said,
'O maiden, if indeed ye list to sing,
Sing, and unbind my heart that I may
 weep'
Whereat full willingly sang the little
 maid

'Late, late, so late' and dark the
 night and chill
I ate, late, so late! but we can enter still
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now

'No light had we for that we do
 repent,
And leaving this, the bidegroom will
 relent
Too late, too late! ye cannot enter now

'No light so late' and dark and chill
 the night!
O let us in, that we may find the light!
Too late, too late ye cannot enter now

'Have we not heard the bridegroom is
 so sweet?
O let us in, tho' late, to kiss his feet!
No, no, too late! ye cannot enter now'

So sang the novice, while full passionately,
Her head upon her hands, remembering

Her thought when first she came, wept
the sad Queen
Then said the little novice Prattling to her,

'O pray you, noble lady, weep no
more,
But let my words, the words of one so
smill,

Who knowing nothing knows but to obey,
And if I do not there is penance given—
Comfoit your sorrows, for they do not
flow

From evil done, right sure am I of that,
Who see you tender grace and statelyness
But weigh your sorrows with our lord the
King's,

And weighing find them less, for gone is
he

To wage grym war against Sir Lancelot
there,

Round that strong castle where he holds
the Queen,

And Modred whom he left in charge of
all,

The traitor—Ah sweet lady, the King's
grief

For his own self, and his own Queen, and
realm,

Must needs be thrice as great as any of
ours

For me, I thank the saints, I am not
great

For if there ever come a grief to me
I cry my cry in silence, and have done
None knows it, and my tears have brought
me good

But even were the griefs of little ones
As great as those of great ones, yet this
grief

Is added to the griefs the great must
bear,

That howsoever much they may desire
Silence, they cannot weep behind a
cloud

As even here they talk at Almesbury
About the good King and his wretched
Queen,

And were I such a King with such a Queen,
Well might I wish to veil her wickedness,
But were I such a King, it could not be '

Then to her own sad heart mutter'd the
Queen,
'Will the child kill me with her innocent
talk?'

But openly she answer'd, 'Must not I,
If this false traitor have displaced his lord,
Grieve with the common grief of all the
realm?'

'Yea,' said the maid, 'this is all
woman's grief,

That *she* is woman, whose disloyal life
Hath wrought confusion in the Table
Round

Which good King Arthur founded, years
ago,
With signs and miracles and wonders,
there

At Camelot, ere the coming of the Queen'

Then thought the Queen within herself
again,

'Will the child kill me with her foolish
prate?

But openly she spake and said to her,
'O little maid, shut in by nunneriy walls,
Whit crast thou know of Kings and
Tables Round,

Or what of signs and wonders, but the
signs

And simple miracles of thy nunnery?'

To whom the little novice gravulously,
'Yea, but I know the land was full of
signs

And wonderis ere the coming of the Queen
So said my father, and himself was knight
Of the great Table—at the founding of it
And rode thereto from Lyonesse, and
he said

That as he rode, an hour or maybe twyn
After the sunset, down the coast, he heard
Strange music, and he paused, and turn
ing—there,

All down the lonely coast of Lyonesse,
Each with a beacon stai upon his head,
And with a wild sea-light about his feet,
He saw them—headland after headland
flame

Fu on into the rich heart of the west

And in the light the white mermaiden
swam,
And strong man-breasted things stood
from the sea,
And sent a deep sea voice thro' all the
land,
To which the little elves of chasm and cleft
Made answer, sounding like a distant horn
So said my father—yea, and furthermore,
Next morning, while he past the dim lit
woods,
Himself beheld three spirits mad with
joy
Come dashing down on a tall way-side
flow'r,
That shook beneath them, as the thistle
shakes
When three gray linnets wrangle for the
seed
And still at evenings on before his hoise
The flickering fany circle wheel'd and
broke
Flying, and link'd again, and wheel'd and
broke
Flying, for all the land was full of life
And when it first he came to Camelot,
A wreath of my dances hund in-hand
Swung round the lighted lantern of the
hall,
And in the hall itself was such a feast
As never man had dieum'd, for every
knight
Had whitsomever meat he long'd for serv'd
By hands unseen, and even he said
Down in the cellar many bloated things
Shoulder'd the spigot, straddling on the
butts
While the wine ran so glad were spirits
and men
Before the coming of the sinful Queen

Then spake the Queen and somewhat
Litterly,
‘Were they so glad? ill prophets were
they all,
Spirits and men could none of them
foresee,
Not even thy wise father with his signs
And wonders, what his fall'n upon the
realm?’

To whom the novice garulously agan,
‘Yea, one, a bard, of whom my father
said,
Full many a noble war song had he sung,
Ev'n in the presence of an enemy's fleet,
Between the steep cliff and the coming
wave,
And many a mystic lay of life and death
Had chant'd on the smoky mountain
tops,
When round him bent the spirits of the
hills
With all their dewy hair blown back like
flame
So said my father—and that night the bard
Sang Arthur's glorious wus, and sang
the King
As wellnigh moie than man, and rail'd at
those
Who call'd him the false son of Gorlois
For there was no man knew from whence
he came,
But after tempest, when the long wave
broke
All down the thundering shores of Bude
and Los,
There came a day as still as heaven, and then
They found a naked child upon the sands
Of dark Tintagil by the Cornish sea,
And that was Arthur, and they foster'd
him
Till he by miacle was approven King
And that his grave should be a mystery
From all men, like his bith, and could
he find
A woman in her womanhood as great
As he was in his manhood, then, he sang,
The twain together well might change the
world
But even in the middle of his song
He falter'd, and his hand fell from the
hair,
And pale he tun'd, and reel'd, and woul'd
have fall'n,
But that they stay'd him up, nor woul'd
he tell
His vision, but what doubt that he fore-
saw
This evil work of Lancelot and the Queen?’

He spared to lift his hand against the King
Who made him knight but many a
knight was slain,
And many more, and all his kith and kin
Clave to him, and abode in his own land
And many more when Modred raised
revolt,
Forgetful of then troth and fealty, clave
To Modred, and a remnant stays with me
And of this remnant will I leave a part
True men who love me still, for whom I
live,
To guard thee in the wild hour coming on,
Lest but a hour of this low head be hum'd
Fear not thou shalt be gured till my
death
Howbeit I know, if ancient prophecies
Have eir'd not, that I much to meet my
doom
Thou hast not made my life so sweet to
me,
That I the King should greatly care to
live,
For thou hast spoilt the purpose of my life
Bear with me for the last time while I
show,
Ev'n for thy sake, the sin which thou hast
sinn'd
For when the Roman left us, and their law
Relax'd its hold upon us, and the wits
Were fill'd with rapine, here and there a
deed
Of prowess, done redess'd a random
wrong
But I was first of all the kings who drew
The knighthood errant of this realm and
all
The realms together under me, their
Head,
In that fair Order of my Table Round,
A glorious company, the flower of men,
To serve as model for the mighty world,
And be the fair beginning of a time
I made them lay their hands in mine and
swear
To reverence the King, as if he were
Then conscience, and then conscience is
then King,
To break the heathen and uphold the
Christ,

To ride abroad redressing human wrongs,
To speak no slander, no, nor listen to it,
To honour his own word as if his God's,
To lead sweet lives in purest chastyty,
To love one maiden only, cleve to her,
And worship her by yeas of noble deeds,
Until they won her, for indeed I knew
Of no more subtle master under heaven
Than is the maiden passion for a maid,
Not only to keep down the base in man,
But teach high thought, and amiable
words
And courtliness, and the desire of fame,
And love of truth, and all that makes a
man
And all this throve before I wedded thee,
Believing, "to mine helpmate, one to feel
My purpose and rejoicing in my joy"
Then came thy shameful sin with Lance
lot,
Then came the sin of Tristam and Isolt,
Then others, following these my mightiest
knights,
And drawing foul ensample from fai
names,
Sinn'd also, till the loathsome opposite
Of all my heart had destined did obtain,
And all thro' theel so that this life of mine
I gound as God's high gift from scathe
and wrong,
Not greatly care to lose, but rather think
How sad it were for Arthur, should he live,
To sit once more within his lonely hall,
And miss the wonted number of my
knights,
And miss to hear high talk of noble deeds
As in the golden dais before thy sin
For which of us, who might be last, could
speak
Of the pure heart, nor seem to glance at
thee?
And in thy bowers of Camelot or of Usk
thy shadow still would glide from room
to room,
And I should evimore beweit with thee
In hanging robe or vesture on me,
Or ghostly footfall echoing on the stony
For think not thou' thou wouldest not love
thy lord,
Thy lord has wholly lost his love for thee

I am not made of so slight elements
Yet must I leave thee, woman, to thy
shame

I hold that man the wrost of public foes
Who either for his own or children's sake,
To save his blood from scandal, lets the
wife

Whom he knows false, abide and rule the
house

For being thro' his cowardice allow'd
Her station, taken everywhere for pure,
She like a new disease, unknown to men,
Creeps, no precaution used, among the
crowd,

Makes wicked lightnings of her eyes, and
saps

The fealty of our friends, and stirs the
pulse

With devil's leaps, and poisons half the
young

Worst of the worst were that man he that
reigns!

Better the King's waste heurh and aching
heat

Than thou reseated in thy place of light,
The mockery of my people, and their
bane;

He paused, and in the pruse she crept
an inch

Never, and laid her hands about his feet
Lay off a solitary trumpet blow
Then waiting by the dooirs the warhorse
neigh'd

As it a friend's voice, and he spake agun

* Yet think not that I come to uige thy
cimes,

I did not come to curse thee, Guinevere,
I, whose vast pity almost makes me die
To see thee, lying there thy golden head,
My pride in happier summers, at my feet
The wrath which forced my thoughts on

that fierce law,

The doom of treason and the flaming
death,

(When first I leant thee hidden heic) is
past

The pung—which while I weigh'd thy
heart with one

Too wholly true to dREAM untruth in thee,
Made my teais buri—is also past—in
part

And all is past, the sin is sinn'd, and I,
Lo ! I forgive thee, as Eternal God
Forgives do thou for thine own soul the
rest

But how to take last leave of all I loved?
O golden hair, with which I used to play
Not knowing ! O imperial moulded form,
And beauty such as never woman wore,
Until it came a kingdom's curse with
thee—

I cannot touch thy lips, they are not mine,
But Lancelot's nay, they never were the
King's

I cannot take thy hand, that too is flesh,
And in the flesh thou hast sinn'd, and
mine own flesh,
Here looking down on thine polluted, cues
“I loathe thee” yet not less, O Guine-
vere,

For I was ever virgin save for thee,
My love thro' flesh hath wrought into my
life

So far, that my doom is, I love thee still
Let no man dream but that I love thee still
Perchance, and so thou purify thy soul,
And so thou lean on our fair father Christ,
Hieerafter in that world where ill are pure
We two may meet before high God, and
thou

Wilt spring to me, and claim me thine,
and know

I am thine husband—not a smaller soul,
Nor Lancelot, nor another Leave me
that,

I charge thee, my last hope Now must
I hence

Thro' the thick night I hear the trumpet
blow

They summon me their King to lead mine
hosts

Fall down to that great battle in the west,
Where I must strike against the man they
call

My sister's son—no kin of mine, who
leagues

With Lords of the White Horse, heathen,
and knights,

Tutors—and strike him dead, and meet
myself
Death, or I know not what mysterious
doom
And thou remaining here wilt learn the
event,
But hitherto shall I never come again,
Never lie by thy side, see thee no more—
Farewell!"

And while she grovel'd at his feet,
She felt the King's breath wander o'er her
neck,
And in the darkness o'er her fallen head,
Perceived the waving of his hands that
blest

Then, listening till those numed steps
were gone,
Rose the pale Queen, and in her anguish
found
The casement 'peradventure,' so she
thought,
'If I might see his face, and not be seen'
And lo, he sat on horseback at the door!
And near him the six nuns with each a
light
Stood, and he gave them charge about the
Queen,
To guard and foster her for evermore
And while he spake to these his helm was
lower'd,
To which for crest the golden dragon
clung
Of Britain, so she did not see the face,
Which then was as an angel's, but she
saw,
Wet with the mists and smitten by the
lights,
The Dragon of the great Pendragonship
Blaze, making all the night a stem of
fire
And even then he turn'd, and more and
more
The moony vapour rolling round the King,
Who seem'd the phantom of a Giant in it,
Enwound him fold by fold, and made him
gray
And grayed, till himself became as mist
Before her, moving ghostlike to his doom

Then she stretch'd out her arms and
cried aloud
'Oh Arthur!' there her voice brake
suddenly,
Then—as a stream that spouting from a
cliff
Falls in mid air, but gathering at the base
Reaches itself, and dashes down the
vale—
Went on in passionate utterance

'Gone—my lord!
Gone thro' my sin to slay and to be slain!
And he forgave me, and I could not speak
Farewell? I should have answer'd his
farewell
His mercy choked me Gone, my lord
the King,
My own true lord! how dare I call him
mine?
The shadow of another cleaves to me,
And makes me one pollution he, the
King,
Call'd me polluted shall I kill myself?
What help in that? I cannot kill my sin,
If soul be soul, nor can I kill my shame,
No, nor by living can I live it down
The days will grow to weeks, the weeks
to months,
The months will add themselves and make
the years,
The years will roll into the centuries, .
And mine will ever be a name of scorn
I must not dwell on that desert of fame
Let the world be, that is but of the world
What else? what hope? I think there was
a hope,
Except he mock'd me when he spake of
hope,
His hope he call'd it, but he never mocks,
For mockery is the fume of little hearts
And blessed be the King, who hath so
given
My wickedness to him, and left me hope
That in mine own heart I can live down
sin
And be his mate hereafter in the heavens
Before high God Ah great and gentle
lord,
Who wist, as is the conscience of a sinner

Among his warning senses, to thy
knights—

To whom my false voluptuous pride, that
took

Full easily all impressions from below,
Would not look up, or half despised the
height

To which I would not or I could not
climb—

I thought I could not breathe in that fine
air

That pure severity of perfect light—
I wanted warmth and colour which I
found

In I ancelot—now I see thee what thou
art,

Thou art the highest and most human
too,

Not Lancelot, nor another Is there
none

Will tell the King I love him tho' so late?
Now—ere he goes to the great Battle?

none

Myself must tell him in that pure life,
But now it were too daring Ah my
God,

What might I not have made of thy fair
world,

If had I but loved thy highest creature
here?

It was my duty to have loved the highest
It surely was my profit had I known

It would have been my pleasure had I
seen

We needs must love the highest when we
see it,

Not Lancelot, nor another'

Here her hand
Gasp'd, made her vail her eyes she
look'd and saw

The novice, weeping, suppliant, and said
to her,

'Yet little mad, for am I not forgiven?' Then glancing up beheld the holy nuns

All round her, weeping, and her heart
was loosed

Within her, and she wept with these and
said,

'Ye know me then, that wicked one,
who broke

The vast design and purpose of the King
O shut me round with narrowing nunneries
wills,

Meek maidens, from the voices crying
"shame"

I must not scorn myself he loves me still
Let no one dream but that he loves me
still

So let me, if you do not shudder at me,
Nor shun to call me sister, dwell with
you,

Were black and white, and be a nun like
you,

Fast with your fasts, not feasting with
your feasts,

Grieve with your griefs, not grieving at
your joys,

But not rejoicing, mingle with your rites,
Pray and be pray'd for , lie before your
shrines ,

Do each low office of your holy house ,
Walk you dim cloister, and distribute dole

To poor sick people, richer in His eyes
Who ransom'd us, and halter too than I ,
And treat their loathsome hurts and heal

mine own ,

And so weal out in almsdeed and in prayer

I he sombre close of that voluptuous day,

Which wrought the ruin of my lord the

King'

She said they took her to themselves ,
and she

Still hoping, fearing 'is it yet too late?'
Dwelt with them, till in time their Abbess

died

Then she, for her good deeds and her
pure life,

And for the power of ministration in her,
And likewise for the high rank she had

borne,
Was chosen Abbess, there, an Abbess,

lived
For three brief years, and there, an

Abbess, first
To where beyond these voices there is
peace

THE PASSING OF ARTHUR

THAT story which the bold Sir Bedivere,
First made and latest left of all the
knights,

Told, when the man was no more than a
voice

In the white winter of his age, to those
With whom he dwelt, new faces, other
minds

For on their march to westward,
Bedivere,
Who slowly paced among the slumbering
host,
Heard in his tent the mornings of the
King

'I found Him in the shining of the stars,
I mark'd Him in the flowering of His
fields,

But in His ways with men I find Him not
I waged His wars, and now I pass and die
O me! for why is all around us here
As if some lesser god had made the world,
But had not force to shape it as he would,
Till the High God behold it from beyond,
And enter it, and make it beautiful?
Or else as if the world were wholly fair,
But that these eyes of men are dense and
dim,

And have not power to see it as it is
Perchance, because we see not to the
close,—

For I, being simple, thought to work His
will,

And have but stricken with the sword in
vain,

And all whereon I lean'd in wife and friend
Is traitor to my peace, and all my realm
Reels back into the beast, and is no more
My God, thou hast forgotten me in my
death

Nay—God my Christ—I pass but shall
not die'

I then, ere that last weird battle in the
west,
There came on Arthur sleeping, Gwain
kill'd

In Lancelot's way, the ghost of Gwain
blown

Along a wandering wind, and past his eye
Went shrilling, 'Hollow, hollow all
delight'

Hail, King! to morrow thou shalt pass
away

Farewell! there is an isle of rest for thee
And I am blown along a wandering
wind,

And hollow, hollow, hollow all delight'
And funeral onward, like wild birds that
change

Then season in the night and wail then
way

From cloud to cloud, down the long wind
the dream

Shrill'd, but in going mingled with dim
cues

Fu in the moonlit haze among the hills,
As of some lonely city sack'd by night,
When all is lost, and wife and child with
wail

Pass to new lords, and Arthur woke and
call'd,

'Who spake? A dream O light upon
the wind,

Thine, Gwain, was the voice—use these
dim cues

Thine? or doth all that hunts the waste
and wild

Mouin, knowing it will go along with me?'

This heard the bold Sir Bedivere and
spake

'O me, my King, let pass whatever will,
Elves, and the hairless glamour of the
field,

But in then stead thy name and glory cling
To all high places like a golden cloud
For ever but is yet thou shalt not pass
Light was Gwain in life, and light in
death

Is Gwain, for the ghost is as the man,
And cue not thou for dreams from him,
but use—

I hear the steps of Modred in the west,

And with him many of thy people, and
knights
Once thine, whom thou hast loved, but
grosser grown
Than heathen, spitting at their vows and
thee
Right well in heart they know thee for
the King
Arise, go forth and conquer is of old '

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere
'Fair other is this battle in the west
Whereto we move, than when we strove
in youth,
And brikē the petty kings, and fought
with Rome,
Or thrust the heathen from the Roman
wall,
And shook him thro' the north Ill doom
is mine
To war against my people and my knights
The king who fights his people fights
himself
And they my knights, who loved me once,
the stroke
That strikes them dead is as my death to
me
Yet let us hence, and find or feel a way
Thro' this blind haze, which ever since I
saw

One lying in the dust at Almesbury,
With folded in the passes of the world '

Then rose the King and moved his host
by night,
And ever push'd Sir Modred, league by
league,
Back to the sunset bound of Lyonesse—
A land of old upheaven from the abyss
By fire, to sink into the abyss again,
Where fragments of forgotten peoples
dwelt,
And the long mountuns ended in a coast
Of ever shifting sand, and far away
The phantom circle of a moaning sea
There the pursuer could pursue no more,
And he that fled no further fly the King,
And there, that day when the great light
of heaven

Burn'd at his lowest in the rolling year,
On the waste sand by the waste sea they
closed
Nor ever yet had Arthur fought a fight
Like this last, dim, weird battle of the
west
A deathwhite must slept over sand and
sea
Whereof the chill, to him who breathed
it, diew
Down with his blood, till all his heart was
cold
With formless fear, and ev'n on Arthur
fell
Confusion, since he saw not whom he
fought
For friend and foe were shadows in the
mist,
And friend slew friend not knowing whom
he slew,
And some had visions out of golden
youth,
And some beheld the faces of old ghosts
I look in upon the battle, and in the mist
Was many a noble deed, many a base,
And chance and craft and strength in
single fights,
And ever and anon with host to host
Shocks, and the splintering spear, the
hard mail hewn,
Shield breakings, and the clash of bands,
the crash
Of battleaxes on shatter'd helms, and
shreiks
After the Christ, of those who falling down
Look'd up for heaven, and only saw the
mist,
And shouts of heathen and the traitor
knights,
Oaths, insult, filth, and monstrous blas-
phemies,
Sweat, withings, anguish, labouring of
the lungs
In that close mist, and crying for the
light,
Moans of the dying, and voices of the dead
Last, as by some one deathbed after
wul
Of suffering, silence follows, or tho' death

On deathlike swoon, thus over all that shore,
Save for some whisper of the seething seas,
A dead hush fell, but when the dolorous day
Grew drearier toward twilight falling, came
A bitter wind, clear from the North, and blew
The mist aside, and with that wind the tide
Rose, and the pale King glanced across
the field
Of battle but no man was moving there,
Nor any cry of Christian head thereon,
Nor yet of heathen, only the wan wive
Broke in among dead faces, to and fro
Swaying the helpless hands, and up and down
Tumbling the hollow helmets of the fallen,
And shiver'd brands that once had fought
with Rome,
And rolling fu along the gloomy shore
The voice of days of old and days to be

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere,
And whiter than the mist that all day long
Had held the field of battle was the King

'Hearest thou this great voice that shakes the world,
And wastes the narrow realm whereon we move,
And beats upon the faces of the dead,
My dead, as tho' they had not died for me?—

O Bedivere, for on my heart hath fallen confusion, till I know not what I am,
Nor whence I am, nor whether I be King
Behold, I seem but King among the dead'

Then spake the bold Sir Bedivere
'My King,
King everywhere' and so the dead have kings,
There also will I worship thee as King
Yet still thy life is whole, and still I live
Who love thee, but who hates thee, he that brought

The heathen back among us, yonder stands,
Modred, unham'd, the traitor of thine house'

Then spake the King 'My house hath been my doom
But call not thou this traitor of my house
Who hath but dwelt beneath one roof with me
My house ne rather they who swore my vow,
Yet, even while they brake them, own'd me King
And well for thee, saying in my dulc hour,
When all the purport of my throne hath ful'd,
That quick or dead thou holdest me for King
King am I, whatsoever be then cry,
And one last act of kinghood shalt thou see
Yet, ere I pris' And uttering this the King

Made at the man then Modred's note
his liege
Held on that helm which many a heathen sword
Had beaten thin, while Arthur at one blow,

Striking the last stroke with Excalibur,
Slew him, and all but spun himself, he fell

So all day long the noise of battle roll'd
Among the mountains by the winter sea,
Until King Arthur's Fable, man by man,
Had fall'n in Lyonnesse about their lord,
King Arthur Then because his wound was deep,

The bold Sir Bedivere uplifted him,
And bore him to a chapel nigh the field,
A broken chancel with a bale en cross,
That stood on a dark strait of barren land
On one side by the Ocean, and on one

Lay a great vicer, and the moon was full

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedivere
'The sequel of to day unsoldiers all
The goodliest fellowship of famous knights

Whereof this world holds record Such
a sleep
They sleep—the men I loved I think
that we

Shall never more, at any future time,
Delight our souls with talk of knightly
deeds,

Walking 'bout the gardens and the halls
Of Camelot, as in the days that were
I perish by this people which I made,—
Tho' Merlin swore that I should come
agun

To rule once more, but, let what will be,
be,

I am so deeply smitten tho' the helm
That without help I cannot last till morn
Thou therefore take my brana Excalibui,
Which was my pride for thou remem-
berest how

In those old days, one summer noon, an
ain

Rose up from out the bosom of the lake,
Clothed in white samite, mystic, won-
deiful,

Holding the sword—and how I row'd
across

And took it, and have worn it, like a king,
And, wheresoever I am sung or told
In after-time, this also shall be known
But now dely not to tale Excalibui,
And fling him far into the middle mere
Watch what thou seest, and lightly bring
me word'

To him replied the bold Sir Bedivere
'It is not meet, Sir King, to leave thee
thus,
Aidless, alone, and smitten tho' the
helm—
A little thing may harm a wounded man,
Yet I thy best will all perform at full,
Watch what I see, and lightly bring the
word'

So saying, from the sunn'd shire he
stept,
And in the moon athwart the place of
tombs,
Where lay the mighty bones of ancient
men,

Old knights, and over them the sea wind
sang

Shull, chill, with flakes of foam He,
stepping down

By zigzag paths, and juts of pointed rock,
Came on the shining levels of the lake

There drew he forth the brand Excali-
bur,

And o'er him, drawing it, the winter
moon,

Brightening the skirts of a long cloud,
ian foith

And spak'd keen with frost against the
hilt

For a'l the haft twinkled with diamond
sparks,

Myriads of topaz lights, and jacinth wolk
Of subtlest jewellery He grazed so long
That both his eyes were dazzled as he
stood,

This way and that dividing the swift mind,
In act to throw but at the last it seem'd
Better to leave Excalibur conceal'd

There in the many knotted waterflags,
Thit whistled stiff and dry 'bout the
marge

So strode he back slow to the wounded
King

Then spake King Arthur to Sir Bedi-
vere

'Hast thou perform'd my mission which
I gave?

What is it thou hast seen? or what hast
heud?''

And answer made the bold Sir Bedi-
vere

'I heud the ripple woshing in the reeds,
And the wild water lipping on the crag'

To whom replied King Arthur, fount
and pale

'Thou hast betray'd thy nature and thy
name,

Not rendering true answer, as beseem'd
Thy fealty, nor like a noble knight
For sur sign had follow'd, either hand,
Or voice, or else a motion of the men
This is a shameful thing for men to he

Yet now, I charge thee, quickly go again,
As thou art lief and dear, and do the thing
I bade thee, watch, and lightly bring me
word'

Then went Sir Bedivere the second time
Across the ridge, and paced beside the
meie,
Counting the dewy pebbles, fix'd in
thought,
But when he s̄aw the wonder of the hilt,
How curiously and strangely chas'd, he
smote
His palms together, and he cried aloud

'And if indeed I cast the brand away,
Surely a precious thing, one worthy note,
Should thus be lost for ever from the
earth,
Which might have pleased the eyes of
many men
What good should follow this, if this were
done?
What hum, undone? Deep harm to
disobey,
Seeing obedience is the bond of rule
Were it well to obey then, if a king
demend
An act unprofitable, aginst himself?
The King is sick, and knows not what
he does
What record, or what relic of my lord
Should be to aftertime, but empty bierith
And rumours of a doubt? But were this
kept,
Stored in some treasure house of mighty
kings,
Some one might show it at a joust of arms,
Saying, "King Arthur's sword, Excali
bui,
Wrought by the lonely maiden of the
Lake
Nine years she wrought it, sitting in the
depths
Upon the hidden bases of the hills"
So might some old man speak in the after
time
To all the people, winning reverence
But now much honour and much fame
we're lost'

So spake he, clouded with his own
conceit,
And hid Excalibui the second time,
And so stiode back slow to the wounded
King

Then spoke King Arthur, breathing
heavily
'What is it thou hast seen? or what hast
heard?'

And answei made the bold Sir Bedi
vere
'I heard the water lapping on the crag,
And the long urre washing in the reeds'

To whom replied King Arthur, much
in wrath
'Ah, miserable and unkind, untrue,
Unknighthly, traitor heated! Woe is me!
Authority forgets a dying king,
Laid widow'd of the power in his eye
That bow'd the will I see thee what
thou art,
For thou, the latest left of all my knights,
In whom should meet the offices of all,
I thou wouldest betray me for the precious
hilt,
Either from lust of gold, or like a gul
Valuing the giddy pleasure of the eyes
Yet, for a man in my ful in duty twice,
And the third time may prosper, get thee
hence
But, if thou spur to fling Excalibui,
I will arise and slay thee with my hands'

Then quickly rose Sir Bedivere, and
ran,
And, leaping down the ridges lightly,
plunged
Among the bulrush beds, and clutch'd
the sword,
And strongly wheel'd and threw it The
great brand
Made lightnings in the splendour of the
moon,
And flushing round and round, and
whirl'd in in such,
Shot like a streamer of the northern morn,
Seen where the moving isles of winter
shock.

By night, with noises of the Northern Sea
 So flash'd and fell the brand Excalibui
 But ere he dipt the surface, rose an arm
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, wonderful,
 And caught him by the hilt, and brandish'd
 him
 Three times, and drew him under in the
 mere
 And lightly went the other to the King

Then spoke King Arthur, drawing
 thicker breath
 'Now see I by thine eyes that this is done
 Speak out what is it thou hast heard, or
 seen?'

And answer made the bold Sir Bedi
 veie
 'Sir King, I closed mine eyelds, lest the
 gems
 Should blind my purpose, for I never
 sw,
 Nor shall see, heie or elsewhere, till I die,
 Not tho' I live three lives of mortal men,
 So great a miracle is yonder hilt
 Then with both hands I flung him, wheel-
 ing him,
 But when I look'd agan, behold an aim,
 Clothed in white samite, mystic, won-
 derful,
 That caught him by the hilt, and
 brandish'd him
 Thre times, and drew him under in the
 mere '

And answei made King Arthui, breath-
 ing hard
 'My end draws nigh, 'tis time that I
 were gone.
 Like biold thy shoulders to receive my
 weight,
 And bear me to the margin, yet I fear
 My wound hath taken cold, and I shall
 die '

So saying, from the pavement he half
 rose,
 Slowly, with pain, rechning on his aim,
 And looking wistfully with wide blue eyes
 As in a picture Him Sir Bedivere

Remorsefully regarded thi' his tears,
 And would have spoken, but he found
 not words,
 Then took with care, and kneeling on
 one knee,
 O'er both his shoulders drew the languid
 hands,
 And rising boie him thro' the place of
 tombs

But, as he walk'd, King Arthur panted
 hard,
 Like one that feels a nightmare on his bed
 When all the house is mute So sigh'd
 the King,
 Muttering and murmuring at his eu,
 'Quick, quick !'
 I fear it is too late, and I shall die '
 But the other swiftly stode from ridge to
 ridge,
 Clothed with his breath, and looking, as
 he walk'd,
 Larger than human on the frozen hills
 He heard the deep behind him, and a cay
 Before His own thought drove him like
 a goad
 Dry clish'd his hainess in the icy caves
 And barren chasms, and all to left and
 right
 The bare black cliff clung'd round him,
 as he based
 His feet on juts of slippery cing that rang
 Sharp-smitten with the dint of armed
 heels—
 And on a sudden, lo ! the level lake,
 And the long glories of the winter moon

Then saw they how there hove a dusky
 baige,
 Dark as a funeral scarf from stem to stern,
 Beneath them, and descending they were
 ware
 That all the decks were dense with stately
 forms,
 Black stoled, black hooded, like a dream
 —by these
 Three Queens with crowns of gold and
 from them rose
 A cay that shiver'd to the tingling stars,
 And, as it were one voice, an agony

Of lamentation, like a wind that shrills
All night in a waste land, where no one
comes,
Or hath come, since the making of the
world

Then murmur'd Arthur, 'Place me in
the barge'
So to the barge they came There those
three Queens
Put forth their hands, and took the King,
and wept
But she, that rose the tallest of them all
And fairest, laid his head upon her lap,
And loosed the shutter'd casque, and
chafed his hanas,
And call a him by his name, complaining
loud,
And dropping bitter tears against a brow
Striped with dark blood for all his face
was white
And colourless, and like the wither'd
moon
Smote by the fresh beam of the spring-
ing east,
And all his greaves and cusses dash'd with
diops
Of onset, and the light and lustrious
cuirs—
That made his forehead like a rising sun
High from the dus throne—we're pruch'd
with dust,
Or, clotted into points and hanging loose,
Mix'd with the knightly growth that
finged his lips
So like a shutter'd column lay the King,
Not like that Arthur who, with lance in
rest,
From spur to plume a star of tournament,
Shot thro' the lists at Camelot, and
charged
Before the eyes of ladies and of kings

Then loudly cried the bold Sir
Bedivere
'Ah! my Lord Arthur, whither shall I go?
Where shall I hide my forehead and my
eyes?
For now I see the true old times are
dead,

When every morning brought a noble
chance,
And every chance brought out a noble
knight
Such times have been not since the light
that led

The holy Elders with the gift of myrrh
But now the whole Round Table is dis-
solved
Which was in image of the mighty world,
And I, the last, go forth companionless,
And the days darken round me, and the
years,
Among new men, strange faces, other
minds,'

'And slowly answer'd Arthur from the
budge
'The old order changeth, yielding place
to new,
And God fulfills himself in many ways,
I est one good custom should corrupt the
world
Comfort thyself what comfort is in me?
I have lived my life, and that which I
have done
My He within himself make pure! but
thou,
If thou shouldst never see my face again,
Pray for my soul More things are
wrought by prayer
Than this world dreams of Wherefore,
let thy voice
Rise like a fountain for me night and day
For what us men better than sheep or goats
That nourish a blind hysc within the brain,
If, knowing God, they lift not hands of
prayer
Both for themselves and those who call
them fiend?
For so the whole round earth is every way
Bound by gold chains about the feet of
God

But now farewell I am going a long way
With these thou seest—if indeed I go
(For all my mind is clouded with a
doubt)—

To the island valley of Avilion,
Where falls not hail, or rain, or any snow,
Nor ever wind blows loudly, but it lies

Deep meadow'd, happy, fur with orchaid
lawns
And bowey holio's crown'd with summer
sea,
Where I will heal me of my grievous
wound'

So said he, and the barge with oar and
sail
Moved from the bank, like some full
breasted swan
That, fluting a wild coo! eie her death,
Ruffles her pure cold plume, and takes
the flood
With swathy webs Long stood Sir
Bedivere
Revolving many memories, till the hull
Look'd one black dot against the verge of
dawn,
And on the moe the wailing died away

But when that moan had past for ever
more,
The stillness of the dead world's winter
dawn
Amaz'd him, and he groan'd, 'The King
is gone'
And therewithal came on him the wend
ryme,
'From the great deep to the great deep
he goes'

Wherent he slowly turn'd and slowly
clomb
The last hard footstep of that non
crag,

Thence mark'd the black hull moving yet,
and cried,
'He passes to be King among the dead,
And after healing of his grievous wound
He comes agen, but—if he come no
more—
O me, be yon dark Queens in yon black
boat,
Who shriek'd and wail'd, the thrie
whereat we gazed
On that high dry, when, clothed with
living light,
They stood before his throne in silence,
fiends
Of Arthur, who should help him at his
need'

Then from the dawn it seem'd there
came, but faint
As from beyond the limit of the world,
Like the last echo born of a great cry,
Sounds, as if some ful city were one voice
Around a king returning from his wars

Thereat once more he moved about,
and clomb
Ev'n to the highest he could climb, and
saw,
Straining his eyes beneath an arch of hand,
Or thought he saw, the speck that bue
the King,
Down that long water opening on the deep
Somewhere far off, pass on and on, and go
From less to less and vanish into light
And the new sun rose bringing the new
year

TO THE QUEEN

O roial to the roial in thyself,
And loyal to thy land, as this to thee—
Bear witness, that icmemorable day,
When, pale as yut, and fever worn, the
Prince
Who scarce had pluck'd his flickering life
again
From halfway down the shadow of the
grave,
Past with thee tho' thy people and then
love,

And Iondon ioll'd one tide of joy tho'
all
Her trebled millions, and loud leagues of
man
And welcome! witness, too, the silent cly,
The prayer of many a race and creed,
and clime—
Thunderless lightnings striking under sea
From sunset and sunrise of all thy realm,
And that true North, whereof we lately
heard

A strain to shame us 'keep you to yourselves ,
So loyal is too costly ! friends—your love
Is but a burthen loose the bond, and go '
Is this the tone of empire ? here the faith
That made us ruleis? this, indeed, her
voice
And meaning, whom the roar of Hougomont
Left mightiest of all peoples under heaven ?
What shock has fool'd her since, that she
should speak
So feebly ? wealthier—wealthier—hour
by hour !
The voice of Britain, or a sinking land,
Some third rate isle half lost among the
seas ?
There rang her voice, when the full city
peal'd
Thee and thy Prince ! The loyal to their
crown
Are loyal to their own far sons, who love
Our ocean empire with her boundless
homes
For ever broadening Englund, and her
throne
In our vast Orient, and one isle, one isle,
That knows not her own greatness if
she knows
And diend's it we are fall'n ——But thou,
my Queen,
Not for itself, but thio' thy living love
For one to whom I made it o'er his grave
Sacred, accept this old imperfect talk,
New-old, and shadowing Sense at war
with Soul
Rather than that gray king, whose name,
a ghost,
Strewn like a cloud, man-shaped, from
mountain peak,
And cleaves to cairn and cromlech still ,
or him

Of Geoffrey's book, or him of Malleoi's,
one
Touch'd by the adulterous finger of a time
That hove'd betwix war and wanton-
ness,
And crownings and dethronements take
with'l
Thy poet's blessing, and his trust that
Heaven
Will blow the tempest in the distance had
From thine and ours for some are scared,
who muk,
Or wisely or unwisely, signs of storm,
Wiveings of every vine with every wind,
And wordy trucklings to the transien
hou,
And fierce or careless loosenes of the
faith,
And Softness breeding scorn of simple
life,
Or Cowardice, the child of lust for gold,
Or Labour, with a groan and not a voice,
Or Art with poisonous honey stol'n from
France,
And that which knows, but careful for
itself,
And that which knows not, ruling that
which knows
To its own harm the goal of this great
world
Lies beyond sight yet—if our slowly
grown
And crown'd Republic's crowning com-
mon sense,
That saved her many times, not fail—
their fears
Are morning shadows huger than the
shapes
That cast them, not those gloomier which
forego
The darkness of that battle in the West,
Where all of high and holy dies away